

# Activists building bright future for our union

**The future of our union is in good hands with younger and newer members getting actively engaged and encouraging their colleagues to do the same.**

Teachers who are now aged 25 years and under will comprise 34% of the teaching profession by 2028, according to research estimates.

This emerging generation will also make up a significant proportion of our union.

Brooke Stevenson and Erica Grinstead are part of this emerging generation of union activists; both are young primary school teachers who have become actively involved in our union by taking on Chapter Representative roles.

## Creating change

IEU Chapter Reps are elected by their colleagues to lead union activities at the workplace level.

Our union recently revitalised the Chapter Rep structure to ensure it reflects members' needs (read more on page 20).

For Brooke, the decision to become an IEU Chapter Rep was about contributing to positive change.

"I joined our union because I wanted to support and be part of a group that advocated for teachers," Brooke said.

## How to get more involved in our union

- Attend IEU Chapter meetings, talk to your Chapter Reps or maybe even follow Brooke and Erica's lead by becoming a Rep.
- Keep an eye on your email inbox and MyIEU member portal for latest IEU updates.
- Get involved with our Beginning Educators Network – BEnet provides tailored resources and support to early career teachers.
- Come along to a union event or training.
- Get involved with collective bargaining or IEU campaigns in your workplace.
- Contact our union when you need us. Your IEU Chapter Reps, IEU organiser and/or our experienced industrial team will be able to help you with any issues or queries at work.



Primary school teachers Brooke Stevenson and Erica Grinstead are part of a new generation of IEU activists making positive change in their workplaces.

Brooke said the job of teachers was very important but not without challenges.

"I like knowing I have people supporting me and fighting for my rights.

"I decided to become a union rep to be part of something bigger that works towards achieving better outcomes for educators."

Erica decided to become an IEU Chapter Rep due to the guidance of an experienced colleague.

"I joined IEU as a pre-service teacher because I love the work [we] do," Erica said.

"I became a union rep after working closely with our previous rep.

"She spoke so highly of [our] union, [its] values, and the work that [we] do in supporting not only teachers but all education staff.

"I just knew I had to be involved," Erica said.

## Union in action

Brooke and Erica have also seen the benefits of union in action since joining the profession.

"I believe the IEU is making a difference in the education profession more broadly by initiating a shift in the understanding of what it means to be a teacher," Brooke said.

"This is especially evident in the [collective bargaining] negotiations that have occurred in recent years.

"During COVID-19 and online learning, I think people have finally begun to understand teaching is certainly not an '8am-3pm job'."

"The IEU has made so many changes in the short time I have been a teacher," Erica said.

"The most significant to me would be the new [collective agreement] and [connected] pay rise."

## Work/life balance

In turning an eye to the future of the profession more broadly, Brooke and Erica agree there are some significant challenges ahead in relation to workload and work/life balance.

Brooke said teachers are being asked to take on more and more work, yet it is rare that anything is removed to make way for the additional workload.

"I think there is still work to be done in the space of acknowledging the workload teachers are being expected to carry," Brooke said.

"I don't work each day to be recognised for my efforts; however, I dream of seeing the profession I am so proud to work in, and the colleagues I am so proud to work alongside, be genuinely appreciated and thanked."

Erica said it would be a significant outcome for all teachers if job descriptions and paid hours matched more closely to the work undertaken.

"In the future I think we need to really focus on work/life balance and the constant pressure teachers, and other education staff, are under to go above and beyond their roles," Erica said.

**New to the profession and want to get more involved? Follow our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/ieuqnt](https://www.facebook.com/ieuqnt)) or login to your member portal ([www.myieu.org.au](https://www.myieu.org.au))**

# Members to the front in new leadership structure

**A revised leadership structure for IEU Chapters is supporting new and existing member leaders to fight for fairness in their workplaces.**

The leadership structure, introduced in Term 1 this year, is designed to better reflect the needs of education professionals in modern workplaces.

Most significantly, the structure provides dedicated representative positions for the various types of employment and professional concerns impacting members.

**What's involved in being a rep and what type of support is available?**

Being a union rep is fundamentally about building power in your workplace and taking a leading role alongside the broader IEU Chapter leadership team to campaign for change.

Key tasks for reps include:

- Recruiting new members to build our union's collective voice.
- Liaising closely with the Chapter's dedicated IEU organiser to coordinate workplace visits and union activities.
- Organising regular Chapter meetings to keep members engaged with union issues and campaigns.
- Collating feedback from members to support the development of campaigns.
- Responding to queries from Chapter members and acting as a support person.
- Staying in touch with our union office, including referring serious workplace issues for further support.
- Taking a pro-active approach to making change at work.
- Co-ordinating Chapter involvement in collective bargaining and other union campaigns.

While reps play a leading role in making change in their workplaces, our union is here to support members in carrying out these crucial roles.



IEU Rep Jess Ladlay (centre) with colleagues Miranda Neven and Ashleigh Kincaid.

Chapters work closely with their dedicated IEU organisers in the development of campaigns.

Organisers are also able to support reps with any complex issues.

A comprehensive training program is available to ensure members are empowered to take on rep roles, as well as a range of resources – including handbooks and fact sheets – to provide practical advice on the day-to-day activities of a union rep.

Find out more about upcoming training and resources by logging in to your member portal at [www.myieuo.org.au](http://www.myieuo.org.au)

**How is the structure going?**

Many IEU Chapters have now elected members to these revised rep leadership roles.

Chapter Representative Nicole Kapernick said the structure was a welcome change.

"As a long-standing rep, the new structure has given our Chapter the opportunity to offer newer members a role that engages them further in union action," Nicole said.

"I'm looking forward to using the new roles to better connect and engage all Chapter members and to plan action across the balance of the year that benefits our members."

Reps have also highlighted that the new structure encourages a distributive leadership model.

"The new structure is working well to delegate responsibilities, tasks and priorities," Wellbeing Representative Keegan Peace said.

Professional Issues Representative Jess Ladlay agreed, saying the new structure helped to formalise elements of how the Chapter operated.

"At our school we were able to fill all of the new Chapter Representative positions which was a positive start," Jess said.

"It will mean the workload is spread in terms of supporting members in our school and it also formalises jobs that were already being done to assist our fantastic Chapter Representative."

Chapter Representative Heather Grundy was pleased to see all five leadership roles filled at her school.

"We have brought three new members on to the [chapter leadership team] to help us," Heather said.

"This is great because they bring new layers of experience and expertise to our team.

"We've also got a double act for the Wellbeing Rep role – two colleagues sharing it – which we think broadens

and deepens the support we can give our colleagues at school."

Heather is also looking forward to talking with member colleagues about how the leadership team will work together to provide support.

"We've now shared the new [Chapter leadership] line-up with our member colleagues at school and will be doing weekly slots at our main briefing each week to explain who does what and who members can speak to when [specific issues arise]," Heather said.

Flexi-school members Melanie King (Senior Admin Officer) and Sally Law (Youth Worker) have both taken on the School Officer/Services Staff Representative role.

"Both of us are classed as school officers [under the rep structure], so we have taken on that role, but in flexi-schooling, this is a diverse category of staff from admin, to youth workers, to canteen and grounds staff, to IT," they said.

"That's why we both decided to join our Chapter Leadership team, to represent a wider group of our colleagues and to ensure our members' voices are well represented from these areas."

Melanie and Sally said the new structure was encouraging and empowering for members who were taking on a union leadership role for the first time.

"We are both very new to the role but are looking forward to attending training this month so we gain a better understanding of what we can do to support our members and work together to bring about positive change for school officers in the next round of bargaining," they said.

**Why take on one of the new roles?**

The new rep roles provide an opportunity for members to get active and organise around the issues of importance to them – whether that

be ensuring support staff concerns are addressed, taking action on social justice issues or better managing professional issues at the workplace level.

Nicole said the new structure helped give a clearer sense of purpose to her IEU Chapter.

"The new roles really make clear what type of activities reps undertake in the Chapter; the structure is also very inclusive and accessible to both newer reps and long-standing ones," Nicole said.

Reps elected under the new structure have expressed the desire to contribute to meaningful change at work.

"I'm hoping from this role [Wellbeing Representative], I can better connect and represent my colleagues – along with being able to provide support and guidance," Keegan said.

"As the Professional Issues Representative, I'm hoping to continue the proactive culture we have at our school," Jess said.

"When a member has a question, I want to be able to clarify matters or point them in the right direction," she said.

Heather said she was motivated to continue in a rep role under the new structure after becoming increasingly active in our union, including participating in her workplace consultative committee, joining the IEU-QNT Education Committee and attending our union's *Just and Fair Workplaces Training*.

"I am really looking forward to continuing to lead a vibrant and active Chapter where all members feel heard and supported," Heather said.

**Where do I find out more about my Chapter's leadership team?**

Members can view a listing of their current Chapter reps in the 'My Chapter' section on the main page of their MyIEU member portal.

**What are the new roles?**

**Chapter Representative**

This is the primary representative role in the Chapter with these reps co-ordinating union activities and overseeing the work of members in the other leadership roles.

**School Officer/Services Staff Representative**

This role provides a dedicated voice for school support staff members within the Chapter, with these reps responsible for reaching out to school officers and services staff and ensuring their interests are represented.

**Wellbeing Representative**

These reps are focused on staff welfare as well as matters of social justice to ensure all Chapter members have access to a safe and fair workplace.

**Professional Issues Representative**

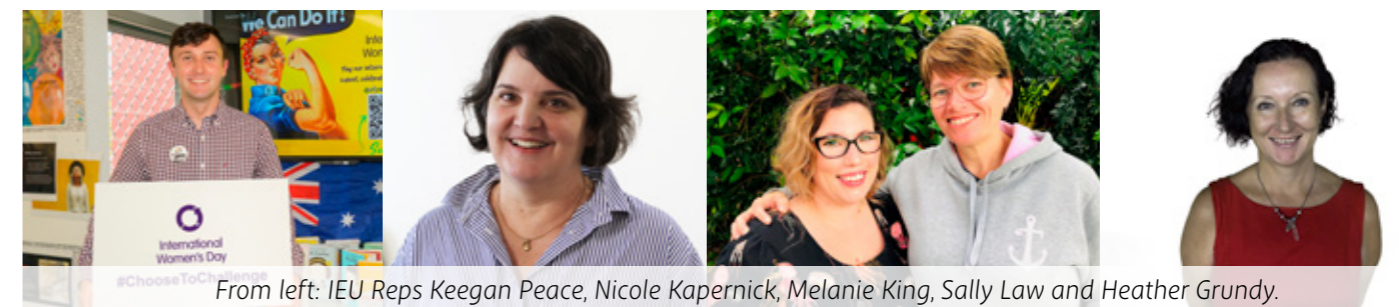
This critical role sees reps engaging with professional concerns impacting teachers and support staff, including providing feedback to our union of the implementation of education initiatives in schools.

**Member Engagement Representative**

Reps in this role understand the importance of strength in numbers and have the important responsibility of encouraging new staff and non-members to join our union and become part of their IEU Chapter.

MyIEU also provides contact details for each member's dedicated IEU organiser, who can provide advice and support about the union activities underway in your workplace.

**Login to the MyIEU member portal at [www.myieuo.org.au](http://www.myieuo.org.au)**



From left: IEU Reps Keegan Peace, Nicole Kapernick, Melanie King, Sally Law and Heather Grundy.