Decades of unwavering service and advocacy



Former SSTUWA General Secretary Mary Franklyn (pictured above) has been made a life member of the Australian Education Union (AEU) in recognition of her outstanding service to the union movement and to public education. Below is an excerpt of the nomination speech given by SSTUWA President Matt Jarman.

Mary's contribution to the SSTUWA began on 24 July 1978. During her early teaching career Mary held multiple positions representing her branch and the members and she rapidly became known as a fearless advocate for her colleagues, for what was right and for the needs of the students in the school she was teaching in at the time.

This quickly expanded beyond her own school gate, Mary was sought out by comrades and school leaders to help resolve matters.

An extra consequence was that this also built a deep respect across most school leaders. She was feared but equally respected.

At the core of all of these matters was what was best for the teacher, the student, the school and public education, a genuine apprenticeship was underway.

Naturally then when Mary did arrive to work in the union office she came in as an industrial organiser; she was now being paid for what she already spent many, many years already doing.

From here Mary became the coordinator of what we refer to in WA as the Education Training Centre. It's a critically important part of our organisation and it was in need of attention when Mary took this responsibility on.

It is now a full team, delivering online and face-to-face, industrial and professional training and is regarded by our members as a professional experience and a high-quality service delivery model that helps to reinforce to our members the value of their membership.

It is also worth noting that Mary's time as general secretary began just after horrendous state budget cuts were inflicted on public education by the Liberal Barnett government. Both schools and TAFEs were left reeling from those devastating decisions. But luckily, along with a handful of others, we had the right person for the job.

As general secretary, Mary set the SSTUWA on the road to financial stability. She and then-union President Pat Byrne doubled the value of our investments. We own our building and this delivers much needed security to our membership.

Whenever major decisions have been required Mary is always the one to ask, "how will this help our members?".

The work she begun on recruitment and retention is another example of a lasting legacy. Our branch membership is at a record high. When Mary commenced as Gen Sec the membership of the SSTUWA was just over 15,200 paying members, it is now just short of 20,000, an incredible increase of almost 25 per cent. We must remember Mary's period as Gen Sec included a [once in] 100-year pandemic, a real threat to every member-based organisation.

Mary Franklyn's leadership was intelligent, principled and deeply grounded in her love of the profession and her respect for the members she represented. Mary's presence was influential during bargaining; and there are countless stories of how she won for members at the bargaining table.

Her legacy is visible not only in our pay scales and structures, but in the very strength and identity of the SSTUWA and the AEU today.

For her decades of unwavering service, courage and advocacy, it is both my honour and my responsibility to seek your endorsement for the conferral of life membership of the AEU to Mary Franklyn.



By Matt Jarman
President

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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