Members building international solidarity

The State School Teachers' Union of WA (SSTUWA) has a long and proud tradition of global advocacy promoting and defending the rights of children and teachers around the world.

This work is grounded in union policy, which recognises that human rights are a legitimate international concern and that the pursuit of peace, justice and disarmament remains an urgent priority for the global community.

As the senior officer for International, I am proud to support the re-establishment of the SSTUWA International Committee.

This reflects a growing commitment among members to engage meaningfully with international issues affecting education and to ensure our union continues to act in solidarity with education communities globally.

One of the reasons members called for the re-establishment of the International Committee was the publicised atrocities in Gaza.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has issued public statements (October 2023, June 2025, September 2025) reflecting members' concerns, stating: "the ongoing genocide in Gaza has torn through the heart of Palestine's education system" and "as teachers and unionists, we cannot turn away. We must speak out, call for change and defend the right of every child, everywhere, to a safe education."

The first meeting of the reformed [SSTUWA] International Committee was held in April 2026.

The committee is chaired by Ruth Ellis, and includes [SSTUWA] industrial organiser Ramona Mitussis, alongside a committed group of public-school teachers and TAFE lecturers. The committee is working to strengthen the union's international voice and ensure member perspectives inform its work.

Members have consistently called for action seeking a stronger, more coordinated response to global events that impact students, teachers and education systems.

Through State Council, members have demonstrated their commitment to international solidarity and to advocating for the protection of education in times of conflict and crisis.

At our first meeting, members shared their motivations for joining the committee. These included a deep commitment to improving the lives of children, advocating for safe and accessible education in challenging contexts and supporting the professional integrity of teachers navigating complex global issues in the classroom.

There was also strong interest in creating space for informed discussion, resource sharing and collective action on international matters.

International issues are not distant from WA classrooms. Our schools are diverse communities, with students and families connected to many parts of the world.

When global conflicts and humanitarian crises occur, their impacts are felt locally through students lived experiences, emotional wellbeing and the questions they bring into our classrooms.

Teachers are increasingly required to support students to make sense of complex and often confronting global events.

This work is not without challenge. Educators are balancing the responsibility to foster critical thinking, empathy and intercultural understanding, while navigating heightened sensitivities and, at times, scrutiny from the broader community.

This underscores the importance of professional support, clear guidance and a strong collective voice.

Through the International Committee, we aim to contribute to this by facilitating dialogue, sharing guidance and ensuring members feel confident and supported when engaging with global issues within the existing national curriculum framework.

At its core, this work is about solidarity, standing with education workers and students everywhere and reaffirming our commitment to safe, inclusive and high-quality public education systems worldwide.

Members can also support international solidarity efforts by getting involved with APHEDA, Union Aid Abroad (visit apheda.org.au for more information).

There are still opportunities for members to be involved in the International Committee. I encourage any member with an interest in global education, human rights and international solidarity to get involved.

Together, we can strengthen our international outlook and ensure that the values of equity, justice and solidarity continue to guide our work both locally and globally.

Related: Education International In solidarity with teachers and students devastated by the Middle East war, read more here.



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