New women and equity officer joins the union team



New SSTUWA women and equity officer Colleen Mack introduces herself and highlights some of the important women and equity issues.

I studied at Edith Cowan University obtaining a Diploma of Teaching (Primary) and later a Bachelor of Education [English as a Second Language (ESL)]. I am also nationally accredited as a mediator and hold a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment.

I have broad experience in education. I started as a remedial/ESL primary school teacher in Boulder, WA, and then moved to remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory where I taught primary and post-primary students. I later worked in adult education at the Institute of Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs. After returning to WA I worked in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) in TAFE for 16 years.

I established and ran a training centre for workers in the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union. My most recent teaching work was in community education and public affairs with the Equal Opportunity Commission WA.

I have served on the SSTUWA TAFE Employee Relations Committee (STERC); the AEU Branch Council; the AEU National TAFE Council; the Unions WA Committee; and was a member of the TAFE Committee, State Council delegate and the SSTUWA Executive for 12 years.

The role of the SSTUWA women and equity officer is to address inequities that affect various individuals and subgroups within our membership. Specifically working with women, who make up approximately 75 per cent of our membership, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and LGBTIQ members.

The current important women and equity issues are:

- A lack of gender equity in superannuation. Most women retire with much less superannuation than men and as a result leave work without adequate resources to fund their retirement. A major cause is breaks in service for parenting and caring roles.
- Gender inequity in leadership positions. Women remain underrepresented in leadership positions.
- Family domestic violence. Women need support when affected by domestic violence in order to retain their jobs and be safe to continue their work.
- There is a need for greater respectful relationships, and the creation of opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander peoples within public education institutions.
- The need for greater awareness, respect and safety for our members and students who identify as LGBTIQ.

Through union membership and action, the SSTUWA and other unions have improved the lives of many. It is a great movement to be part of. I look forward to working with you as members to address equity issues and improve working conditions for all.

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