Creating safe and supportive communities



Recent anti-LGBTIQ+ propaganda at rallies across Australia has emphasised what still needs to be done to protect our LGBTIQ+ community.

You would have thought that this sort of behaviour was in the past and if news headlines from the USA was anything to go by, that it wouldn't occur to that level in Australia. However, we cannot afford to be complacent.

Did you know that though there is anti-discrimination legislation based on sexuality and gender for schools and workplaces, there are no laws in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria protecting LGBTIQ+ people from any hate speech or writing, whether online or in public?

This is leaving the LGBTIQ+ community feeling exposed and vulnerable. We know we need to do better.

Recent statistics show:

- 60 per cent of young LGBTIQ+ people aged between 14-21 years old had felt unsafe at secondary school.
- LGBTIQ+ employees are twice as likely to be victims of workplace discrimination compared to their non LGBTIQ+ colleagues.
- Compared to the general population, LGBTIQ+ people are two and a half times more likely to have been diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition in the past 12 months.

(Source: The Equality Project)

Like everything, it starts with education, conversations and unionising for better outcomes in our society.

SSTUWA LGBTIQ+ Committee member Kai Griffiths (pictured below) and I were fortunate enough to attend the Australian

Education Union (AEU) and New South Wales Teachers Federation's Diversity in Education conference, held prior to the Sydney WorldPride 2023 festival earlier this year.

The conference was an international LGBTIQ+ forum for educators to create awareness and understanding of gains and challenges facing LGBTIQ+ workers within schools, and an opportunity to build community.

The conference aimed to increase awareness of social justice issues facing LGBTIQ+ communities within workplaces, as well as demonstrated pathways to achieve legal and policy reform.

Additionally, the conference had a global focus, which included capacity building, sharing stories and experiences as well as information sharing to build solidarity and grow our education union movement.

We had the opportunity to meet other AEU leaders in this space, international guests and to workshop key questions pertaining to unionism and LGBTIQ+ educational communities. These questions included:

- What would an authentically inclusive union look like?
- What does an LGBTIQ+ inclusive school look/feel/sound like?

The conference provided many useful resources and workshops which will assist our LGBTIQ+ members and also with industrial action going forward.

The research-based short film *What Parents Want: Talking about Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Schools* and its associated package of resources were shared at the conference.

The film focuses on the real voices of parents of gender and sexuality diverse young people and their experiences of navigating the school system with, and for, their child.

The study was conducted in every state and territory. The film can be accessed here.

As a union, we will continue to advocate for our LGBTIQ+ members.
November 2022 State Council Conference endorsed the following recommendations:

- A half-day LGBTIQ+ forum to be held in 2023.
- All agreements going forward to have input from the LGBTIQ+ Committee.
- Continue to increase our visibility to support our LGBTIQ+ members.

Planning and preparation are currently underway for our half-day forum in Term 3. Dates and information will be available soon.

Don't forget to visit sstuwa.org.au/lgbtiq for LGBTIQ+ news and information.



A member's perspective

By Kai Griffiths

I had the privilege of attending the Diversity in Education conference on behalf of the SSTUWA and the LGBTIQ+ Committee thereof.

It was a highly edifying experience, with many lessons taught directly and discernible through the opportunities available at the conference.

Particular highlights for myself were the keynote addresses from Hilario Benzon (National Education Association) speaking on strategy and messaging in the pro-diversity unionism arena in the United States; and Emerson Zerafa-Payne from the Queensland Teachers Union, who focused on the complexities that must be considered with the intersection of trans and indigenous identities.

The eye-opening quality of the workshops will also be of use to the SSTUWA, in particular the work of French, German and Scottish teachers' unions in forwarding the rights of queer members at work.

Additionally, the University of Western Sydney's research into what parents actually expect from relationships and sexual education in regard to queer experiences and health provided great direction in a time when worries about inclusion in curriculum are pressing.

It was truly a space and time with a great combination of affirmation, collegiality and dedication to making education an ever-better space.



By Sharmila Nagar,
Vice President

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