National education and union news



Crackdown on dodgy private providers welcomed

The AEU has welcomed the Albanese Government's introduction of legislation to deal with unscrupulous VET providers, address deceptive conduct and restore integrity and confidence in Australia's vocational education sector.

"These measures are long overdue and we commend the Minister For Skills and Training, Hon Brendan O'Connor, for acting on issues which everyone knows have plagued the VET sector for a very long time," Correna Haythorpe, AEU Federal President said.

Under the Coalition Government, the private for-profit mantra dominated policy debate and funding settings to the detriment of the system, students and
the community.

The measures in the proposed new Bill will allow the national regulator to effectively manage risk and threats to the VET sector to ensure all registrations meet the high standards for registered training organisations (RTOs) and that students have access to high quality provision of vocational education.

It is TAFE's public institutions which continue to uphold high standards and access to high quality teaching programs for their students and we recognise that the Albanese Government is meeting their commitment to centre TAFE at the heart of vocational education in Australia with additional funding, progressive policy and these proposed changes to legislation.

The AEU particularly welcomes measures that will ensure that those RTOs who have failed to provide training and assessment in a 12-month period will have their registration lapse unless there is a genuine reason, and those RTOs who choose to deceive the public will be hit with financial penalties five times that in the current legislation.

“As the Minister said, for too long the system has been plagued with bottom-feeders, fraudsters and cheats. That stops now and we urge all political parties to support this legislation” Ms Haythorpe said.

The ACTU has also welcomed the reforms as a great first step in a much-needed process to remove the worst-behaving providers from the VET system.

“This proposed Bill will improve the integrity and trust of our VET sector. We are pleased that the government is looking to weed out the chancers and the charlatans,” said ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O’Brien.

“We want to see a system that puts quality and training at the heart of registered training organisations and not a system where there are training providers whose primary purpose is extracting huge profits.”

Forced to work due to lack of paid leave

Fifty-two per cent of workers in insecure jobs – including fixed-term and independent contractors, casuals and gig platform workers – have reported to have continued working while ill or injured due to the absence of paid leave, according to new data from the ACTU’s *Work Shouldn’t Hurt* (WSH) survey.

While 18 percent of injured workers in secure jobs reported being unable to take time off due to lack of paid leave, in comparison, this jumped to half of all workers in insecure work.

Another alarming finding was that people in insecure work were more likely to experience physical injuries than those in secure employment, with seven per cent of secure workers reporting a physical injury compared to 11 per cent of insecure workers.

Mental injuries for those in insecure work also rose from 13 per cent in 2021 to 20 per cent in 2023.

The WSH findings support a 2023 survey by McKell Institute, the TWU and TEACHO which showed that more than half of transport gig workers experienced work-related stress, anxiety and mental health issues, and 56 per cent of food delivery riders reported feeling pressure to rush and take risks on the road to earn enough money and avoid deactivation for being deemed too slow.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O’Brien said: “No one should have to go to work when injured or ill simply because their job lacks the most basic of protections. Under the current law, if you’re a casual or gig worker and are injured or ill you’re forced to make the difficult decision of either taking time off with zero pay or
going to work and likely worsening your condition.”

“Parliament has the power to help these vulnerable workers by passing the remaining parts of the Closing Loopholes Bill, which guarantees these workers basic rights that other workers are entitled to.”

A profound record of achievement

The NSW Teachers Federation has paid tribute to outgoing president, Angelo Gavrielatos, whose term concluded at the end of January.

Mr Gavrielatos assumed the presidency of the Federation four years ago and commissioned Valuing the Teaching Profession, an Independent Inquiry, helmed by former WA premier Dr Geoff Gallop, Dr Tricia Kavanagh and Patrick Lee.

After conducting public hearings across NSW and taking expert evidence, it found unmanageable workloads, uncompetitive salaries and insecure employment had combined to create a teacher shortage crisis in NSW public education. This created the evidence base for a significant boost to teacher salaries to end the teacher shortage.

Mr Gavrielatos also oversaw a powerful industrial and political campaign, *More Than Thanks* that broke the wages cap. In the 18 months leading up to the state election, teachers took three separate days of strike action. They made their opposition to wage suppression a key election issue, with a presence at over 325 booths at the state election and continuous, high visibility campaigning in every corner of the state.

Following the election, Mr Gavrielatos negotiated the historic salaries deal between the Teachers Federation and the Minns Government. This increased both starting and top of scale salaries for NSW teachers by more than $9,000, along with major improvements across the pay scale.

“Angelo Gavrielatos has made a profound and tangible improvement to the teaching profession. The campaign run by the union during Angelo’s presidency was essential to creating a new salary structure to end the teacher shortage, rebuild the workforce and give our kids the future they deserve,” said incoming NSWTF President Henry Rajendra.

“Angelo believes in the transformative power of the teaching profession. He has devoted his working life to defending and advancing it. Teachers, students and the general public are all beneficiaries of Angelo’s tenacity, passion and intelligence.” Mr Rajendra has been joined in the leadership group of the NSWTF by Amber Flohm as the deputy president and Natasha Watt as the senior vice president.

“It is an incredible honour to serve as president of the Teachers Federation. We will strive to give public education the resources and respect it deserves,” Mr Rajendra said.

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