

The embodiment of union tradition



From left to right: Robyn Patmore, Stuart Clark, Barb Hayes, Pat Plozza, Jess Clark (no relation), Chloe Scott, Sarah Murray, Emma Cooper and Jess Elliot.

The late Melanie Clark (pictured right) was a teacher at Eneabba Primary School and proud SSTUWA member for 45 years.

Her membership and that of thousands like her is the vital embodiment of our union.

She always upheld the importance of ensuring that teachers were highly valued, as well as students.

Melanie passed away last year and in recognition of her impact and influence on the lives of many students, Eneabba PS organised a memorial arts day on 13 August at the school.

The event, sponsored by the SSTUWA, was organised by members of the school's union branch, its principal and backed by Eneabba community members.

The day was a way of celebrating the arts (Melanie's specialisation was music); a way of ensuring students at Eneabba PS could have wider exposure in this field and moreover, teachers would also benefit from having a day off planning and active teaching.

Melanie attended Mount Lawley Teachers' College between 1972 and 1974. On qualifying she was offered a job in Newman, but was unable to take up this position initially, as she suffered a serious car accident where she broke her back.

Her recovery took time and so in the interim she began teaching at Hilton PS. In 1976 she was able to make it to Newman and taught there for a little over a year. Strong friendships were forged during this time and she remained in touch with colleagues from Newman PS for her entire life.

The list of teaching positions that followed included stints at North Fremantle PS and a music advisory post in East



Kimberley, where she would visit regional schools supporting students and teachers.

She also took a similar role as a literacy specialist in the Pilbara, which she loved and would often talk about.

Melanie married in 1990 and moved to Kojonup, before moving to Eneabba in 1993 where she began teaching at Eneabba Primary School. Melanie and her husband Stuart had three children who attended the school.

As the music specialist there for many years, Melanie was responsible for some spectacular and memorable end of year productions, including an ENE ABBA musical, something staff had wanted to do for years.

Melanie brought to Eneabba a wealth of knowledge and experience, not only from her teaching roles but from experiences gained travelling widely.

On a personal note, her friendship was paramount to me. I arrived in Western Australia from Britain in January 2010.

Mel showed up at my GROH house on the Sunday before my first day of school bringing eggs and sausages, “like a proper farmer’s wife”, to talk me through my class list, which included her daughter.

Even years after I left the school to hit the bright lights of the city, I sought her opinion and advice religiously.

Mel was well travelled, political, a unionist and very, very funny, as well as being completely loved by everyone who knew her, for among other things, her empathy, generosity, support and wisdom.

I was so fortunate that we became firm friends. Vale Melanie Clark (1954–2023).



By Sarah Murray,
School recruitment and retention project officer