Taking the step to be a union rep



There are many aspects of the role of senior vice president for the SSTUWA – but one of those I find the most rewarding and interesting is working with our new union reps.

I am fortunate enough to deliver training to union reps and deputy reps, as well as women's contact officers, as part of the suite of industrial training delivered by our excellent Education and Training Centre (ETC) team.

Without our elected school branch reps, the SSTUWA could not thrive as it has been doing in recent years.

Not every workplace has a rep of course. We call workplaces with no reps unformed branches. I would urge any of you who are at an unformed branch to seriously consider becoming a rep in 2025.

It can sometimes be intimidating to think of taking on such a responsibility, especially when you are already under the pump with a heavy workload – but the rewards of making a real difference in your school, college or other workplace are well worth it.

You will get the support you need. Your district organiser will be your first port of call and attending industrial training provides you with valuable skills, knowledge and resources to undertake your elected role with confidence.

Under coordinator Kevlynn Annandale, the team, including ETC training officer Cherry Bogunovich, coordinator of the school organising team, Natalie Swinbourn, legal services case manager, Mario Schmidt and I deliver level one and level two training for branch officials which teaches skills that will aid you across your careers both as a rep and an educator.

Alongside specialised courses for TAFE reps and school leaders, this training ensures you know all about the resources available to you to make sure the hard-earned improvements in working conditions that we achieve through bargaining get delivered to members in their workplaces.

The strength of the SSTUWA is in its branches – and reps are the people who in turn make sure the branches are active and strong.

In all, almost 300 reps and deputy reps took part in face-to-face training with the SSTUWA in 2024, with 158 attending union rep level one training – up from 94 in 2023.

That is a great sign that our network of reps is expanding across more workplaces every year.

I am lucky enough to talk with these new reps on how they can go about recruiting in the workplace – building their branch in terms of both numbers and influence.

We talk about the advantages of growing branch membership, the benefits of being in the SSTUWA and unpacking things like the school resource pack and the LEAP (Listen Explore Acknowledge Propose) framework.

Because the SSTUWA is committed to collaboration we have reps at all levels of the workforce – and we teach the skills needed to ensure everyone from first year teachers to experienced leaders can work cooperatively to address issues and concerns.

If you are pondering becoming a rep my message is simple – do it. It will be extremely rewarding and you will be helping your colleagues.

Early next year, keep an eye on your eNews, *Western Teacher* and the SSTUWA website for the 2025 version of Getting Organised. That has all the information you need to take the first step to becoming a rep. Who knows where that first step might lead.



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