

# WOMEN IN THE AEU - ACT BRANCH

Women make up the majority of AEU members. Women in the education industry in the ACT have experienced direct and indirect discrimination in their employment opportunities alongside colleagues in other States and Territories.

Statistics for the ACT show that women continue to be under represented in all promotion positions. The attitudes and values which underpin society and the labour market generally result in unconscious and indirect discrimination and will only change very slowly.

## Structures and Resources for Women Members

### 1. Assistant to the Secretary [Professional]

Responsible for Women's Issues - telephone 62727900

The responsibilities of the Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] cover the designated groups - women, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and people from Non English Speaking Backgrounds.

### 2. Women Activists Network

The Women's Activists Network is an important part of the Union's structures. Membership is open to any interested female AEU member and meetings are advertised each term.

The Women Activists Network meets to discuss the industrial and professional issues for women members of the AEU. At Women Activists Network meetings, members plan the work for women members for the year. This includes:

- training for women members;
- forums on important issues affecting women members;
- organising the Women's Dinner;
- monitoring the Department's performance on EEO matters.

Women from all sectors are represented on the Women Activists Network and interested women members should contact the Assistant to the Secretary [Professional].

### 3. Union Policies Dealing With Women/Gender Related Issues

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] works closely with the Equity and Diversity Committee in the Department to ensure the Union perspective on gender inclusive education is heard. In addition, the Union actively debates, develops, reviews and seeks implementation of progressive policies to further the interests of women members. Details of existing Federal AEU and ACT Branch policies may be found on the relevant website – [www.aeufederal.org.au](http://www.aeufederal.org.au) and [www.aeuact.asn.au/info-centre/working-conditions/SchoolsPolicies.htm](http://www.aeuact.asn.au/info-centre/working-conditions/SchoolsPolicies.htm) respectively.

- Equal Employment
- Fertility Control
- Gender Equity
- Sexual Harassment

### 4. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is an industrial issue. It is a real and serious problem which directly affects a worker's well being. Sexual harassment is experienced by teachers, predominantly but not exclusively women, arising from their interactions with other teachers, workers in schools or students. The Assistant Secretary [Professional] is available to give advice to members about such issues if the member believes that some form of discrimination may have occurred in relation to their employment. [Cases of sexual harassment between members and/or students should be reported and advice requested.]

The Department has an Anti Sexual Harassment Policy for Staff. The guidelines should be consulted by all members involved in a sexual harassment incident in any capacity. The guidelines are in all schools and workplaces.

### 5. Ways to Encourage the Participation of Women in Sub-Branches

- Noting the gender balance of the Sub-Branch Executive and Council delegation.
- Ensuring that women members gain skills through strategies such as sharing chairing of meetings, minute taking, panel membership and attendance at Union training courses.

## **6. Federal AEU Women's Structures**

The AEU has a Federal Women's Officer who works in the AEU Federal Office in Melbourne. She is involved in policy advice for women in education and co-ordinating AEU responses to national policies and initiatives. She works closely with the ACTU Women's Committee. The Federal Women's Conference is held each year in Melbourne. The ACT Branch sends a delegation of a minimum of 3 Delegates. The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] attends regular meetings of the Women's Officers from all Branches and associated bodies.

## **7. Childcare**

Childcare is not provided at Council and other meetings. However, support for childcare expenses incurred in attending Union meetings may be requested from the Secretary. Members are encouraged to participate in regular Union activities, for example membership of Executive because a contribution to reimbursement of childcare costs be applied for.