

Getting Involved in your Union [www.aeuact.asn.au]

Teaching is a rewarding, interesting career and one of the fantastic aspects about teaching is that there are so many opportunities that can lead you in many different directions. If you are a current financial member of the AEU, your union offers a number of ways for you to get involved in promoting your professional and industrial interests.

Active Union Membership:

- Make sure you know which of your colleagues are the Sub-Branch Executive representatives [if you are not one yourself], and consult them for advice on how to handle any workplace concerns.
- Find out how often your Sub-Branch meets, and make sure you attend and participate in the meetings.
- Consult the Union Noticeboard in your staffroom and make sure you're up-to-date on AEU views, training, events.
- Ask to see the papers from monthly Council meetings, and the minutes of fortnightly Executive meetings [refer to the "Calendar" link on the AEU website for meeting dates].
- Look for the quarterly issues of *The ACT Teacher*, distributed by the Sub-Branch Secretary and read them carefully [mail drop dates under the "Calendar" link on the website].
- Be aware that your Sub-Branch can submit formal Sub-Branch motions for the Union Executive to consider.
- **Protect the rights and entitlements of your colleagues – they're your rights and entitlements too!**

Opportunities@school:

There are many opportunities that exist for teachers to get involved with our union at the school level. Each year, your school's members will elect three Sub-Branch Executive positions [Sub-Branch President, Deputy President and Secretary], and a number of Councillor positions. These elected representatives of the AEU in your workplace work as a team to distribute union information, lead campaign activities and represent members' interests at your school. The Councillors also participate in AEU meetings which involve representatives from all other Sub-Branches. The AEU co-ordinates the filling of the OH&S Representatives for each school.

On occasion, panels are formed at the school level to fill Higher Duties [temporary placement in a promotions position]. These panels must have a representative from the AEU Sub-Branch who has completed DET panel training [contact DET for training dates]. Being a representative on such a panel is a valuable experience in understanding the processes used to determine the selection of applicants.

The AEU has a regular program of professional development to enable members to gain a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of being on Sub-Branch Executive or Council. In addition to this sort of training, the AEU offers other free courses on a range of topics. The AEU Training Program is put out each semester [refer to the "Training" link on the Union's website www.aeuact.asn.au] or telephone the Union office on 6272-7900.

System Opportunities:

There are many formal departmental committees and working parties that the AEU has representation on, covering a range of issues including qualifications, assessment, student management, OH&S and equity as well as working parties set up from time to time to work on a specific policy. The AEU regularly calls for nominations from members who wish to represent the AEU on these committees. This is advertised through *The ACT Teacher* or through faxes to schools. *The AEU values the contribution of all members, regardless of the level of teaching experience. You are encouraged to nominate yourself for one of the above roles!*

National AEU Events:

The Federal AEU conducts forums [for example, the AEU Women's Conference and the AEU Federal Conference] which bring together teachers and union officials from around Australia to debate issues of national importance and plan future directions for our Union. The ACT Branch regularly seeks teacher representatives to attend such forums and provides funds for them to participate and report back.