

Association Spotlight: Blayney

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Blayney Teachers Association

President: Mathew Cambey

Secretary: Mary Rix

Vice President: Christine Smith

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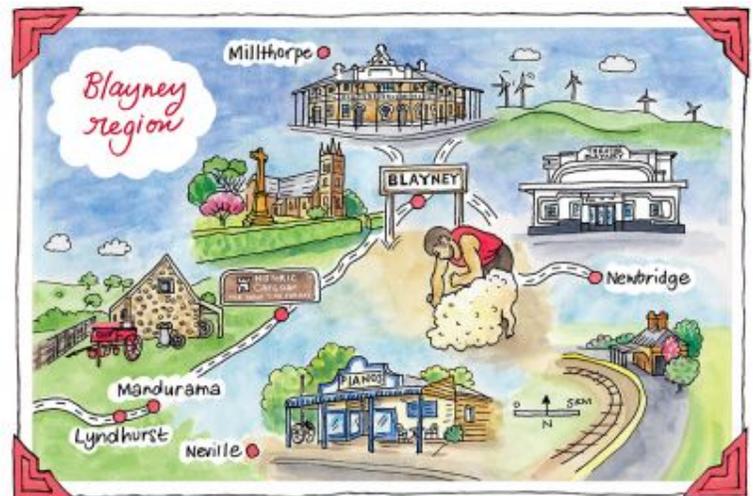
Members: 70

Our meeting

Our association meets once a term, usually after Federation Council, at the Tattersall's Hotel in the main street of Blayney. We have 70 members in the Association who teach at six primary schools and one high school. We get a small turnout of dedicated people who are eager for our members to have a voice. Meetings are usually an intimate affair with the core executive group and other interested members.

Our community

Blayney is a small country town in the central west of the state, situated between Bathurst and Orange, the two regional centres in the area.



While both of these bigger cities have an influence on the district's culture and lifestyle, Blayney fiercely guards its own identity in their shadow. When local governments in the area were amalgamated, Blayney fought to keep our council's local identity. The town's population hovers around 3500 with a district population of about 7000. We have a diverse local economy made up of rural, manufacturing and mining industries. The Blayney Shire is predominately rural in nature, supporting primary industries such as dairying, beef, lamb, wool, viticulture, orchards, potatoes, canola and other grains. Mining is also a key industry and the area supports other industrial activities such as manufacturing, transportation and food processing. Blayney is in a perfect location for rail freight situated in a strategic position at the junction of major north-south and east-west rail lines. The Blayney Intermodal Freight Terminal handles thousands of shipping containers each year destined for ports along the east coast. The major employer in the town is the Nestle Purina Petcare Factory, which manufactures pet food and pet care products. The factory is one of the leading facilities of its type in the world and employs more than 300 people and produces 100,000 tonnes of product each year for the domestic and export markets. Mining is also a contributing factor with the Cadia gold mine one of Australia's largest gold mining operations, having produced more than 9 million ounces of gold since opening in 1999.

The town lies within the state electorate of Bathurst where the member is the Nationals' Paul Toole, the Minister for Lands and Forestry and Minister for Racing. Federally we are represented by the Nationals' Andrew Gee.

Our challenges

Blayney Association has a single high school and primary school in the town with several small primary schools around the district. Those primary schools include Neville, Lyndhurst, Carcoar, Mandurama and Millthorpe. At the moment, the district is enduring a devastating drought that affects all aspects of these communities. Students, staff and parents have felt the impact of drought in many ways. Some students have recently run out of water at home for short periods of time until the water truck arrives to replenish dry tanks and stressed sheep in the high school's agricultural plot are abandoning newly born lambs. This makes for an

interesting school corridor with poddy lambs following a maternal Ag teacher!

Our teachers

The BTA has a diverse demographic. Members across the Association represent all age groups fairly evenly. Our Association has an Executive made up of experienced teachers, one with more than 40 years teaching in rural schools, to an enthusiastic first-year teacher who brings energy and ideas to complement the experience of the oldies. Interestingly, our 3 to 1 female to male demographic across the Association is represented by that same ratio in our Association's position holders.

Our focus

Our primary focus at the moment is strengthening our Association and getting people to actively attend meetings. The Fair Funding Now! campaign will be an increasing issue for all schools as the federal and state elections draw nearer and this is an area we will pursue with the community. The local communities have shown a sympathetic ear to the Gonski campaign as public school students dominate the area. Teacher workload is also another area that members feel strongly about.

The Association is currently in the process of rebuilding. For the past five years, we had not been able to get a working association up and running. Blayney once had a strong and active Association that was attended by members from both the high school and primary schools regularly. The robust discussions at meetings are still remembered by the more experienced members. After a focused campaign at the beginning of the year our AGM elected an executive and the dormant Association was reborn. We now have a core group of dedicated members willing to run the Association at a time of increased pressure from governments to reduce workers' rights, increase our workload and cut funding to schools.

Our events

Our Association is small and has a joint Councillor with Molong. Recently we were invited to join Orange and Molong associations for a dinner to celebrate the centenary of the NSWTF with General Secretary John Dixon. John spoke of the rich history of Federation and showed a wonderful video of that history. It was inspiring to hear about and watch those trailblazers pave the way and build the Federation into what it is today. Our legacy is to continue their struggle.