

Your workplace contacts

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Patience is a virtue worthwhile practising if you intend to be a Federation Representative.

Richard Meyers has been the Fed Rep at Wetherill Park TAFE, in Sydney's west, for about 15 years and has found that patience and persistence are key to success in the role.

"It can take a long time to get a resolution, some cases I've dealt with have taken 18 months to two years to resolve but it can be a very rewarding job," Mr Meyers said. "Much of the job is mediation and not winning or losing."

He had been a union rep in the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) before being employed by TAFE, where he learned the value of union membership: "It's the only way to maintain decent working conditions and salary."

"When I came to TAFE I saw many of the problems I'd encountered before but very little being done to rectify them," he said. "I felt I could help."

"There are always issues to deal with locally. We are always trying to get resources and support for teachers in many different ways including teaching resources, maintenance in colleges, clerical support, accommodation, WHS issues and now, without a student association, trying to get better facilities for students."

Mr Meyers places a lot of stock in the Fed Rep role centred on key issues for the sector.

"It is important to ensure teachers rights are respected," he said.

"We are focused on resisting the workload being pushed on to teachers because of cuts to administration, support staff while demanding more compliance."

"The lack of staff in teaching and student support services is putting a lot of pressure on the existing staff."

"There is also the issue of work intensification as face-to-face hours are reduced to save costs."

While patience may pay off, some issues can be resolved through considered mediation.

"One was a long-running dispute over long service leave entitlements," Mr Meyers said.

"When I was made aware of the issue I called a meeting of the parties involved and in an hour we had a resolution with the member being credited an additional four years' service recognition to 14 years."



“It turned out to be a computer error and a simple fix but had caused a lot of animosity between the member and management.”

Outside of the classroom, Mr Meyers has been a motorsport enthusiast but the years are catching up with him.

“I have been racing speedway for many years, however, as I am 60 next year I am selling up to do some travel both here and abroad. I like to do motorcycle rides. Always ready to try something new though.”