

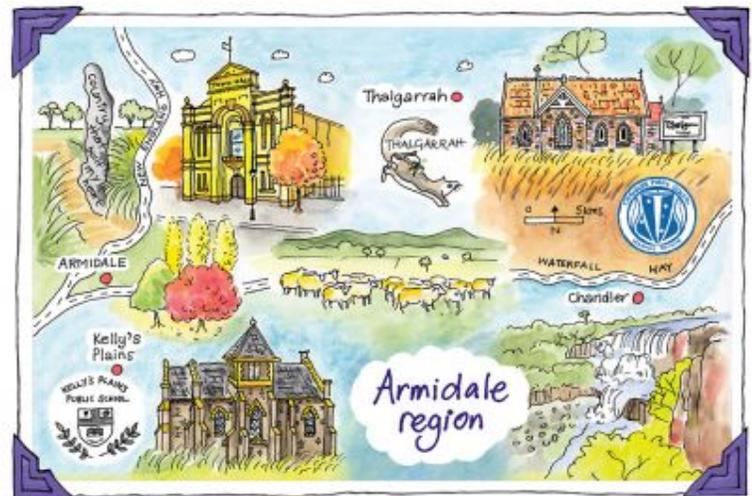
Association Spotlight: Armidale Teachers Association

November 07, 2019

Number of members: 236
President: Michael Sciffer
Secretary: Bruce Myers

Our meetings We average around a dozen members at meetings, with a good mix of primary and high school members. We are a fairly productive association, focused on taking actions to support the Federation's campaigns and address the needs of our members in our schools.

Our most recent meeting had 25 attendees as it focused on the need for additional support for our students from a refugee background. The outcome has been the development of a local campaign for the establishment of an Intensive English Centre, with the support of Federation's Executive. We aim to have meetings that focus on the needs of local members. We gather at Armidale Bowling Club, on Mondays following Council.



Our community Armidale TA meets on the land of the Anaiwan people in the Northern Tablelands, 1000m above sea level. We are surrounded by World Heritage National Parks and stunning gorges and waterfalls. Armidale has a population of 24,500, and education is a major employer, being the home of the University of New England (UNE).

UNE emerged from the old Armidale Teachers College, the first rural teachers college in NSW. Our association consists of eight primary schools, one high school and an environmental education centre. The state electorate of Northern Tablelands is held by the Nationals' Adam Marshall, while Barnaby Joyce holds the federal seat of New England.

Armidale has recently become a rural refugee resettlement community, welcoming Yazidi refugees from Syria and Iraq. The community has been very welcoming to our new arrivals, with many community organisations and dozens of volunteers offering to support refugee families.

Our challenges Our biggest issue is the failure of the Federal Government to fund needs-based funding. Our federal member Barnaby Joyce is an advocate for private schools, refusing to acknowledge the needs of public school students, let alone visit one. Needs-based funding would allow us to effectively support our large number of Aboriginal students, students from a refugee background, and students from low-SES families.

Our focus Two recent actions of the Association have been to meet with our state MP Adam Marshall to address pay anomalies, and to hold a special meeting with Federation's Multicultural officer/Organiser Amber Flohm to address the needs of our schools to support recently arrived students from a refugee background.

Our achievements The best thing our Association has done in the past five years has been to win employment protections for our high school teachers. Armidale Secondary College is the product of the recent merging of Armidale and Duval High Schools to be eventually established in a new \$115 million high school. We campaigned to stop forced transfers arising from the merger. We were able to gain a guarantee from the Department for no nominated transfers as part of the merger for two years beyond the opening of the new high school site. This has since become statewide policy for all school rebuilds.