

## Union campaigning is a time investment worth your while

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In keeping with the idea that you should give your time to the things that make the biggest difference, devote some of your time to participating in Federation activities, says member activist Guv Johal (pictured, far right).

She has been thinking about social rights activist Nelson Mandela's quote: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

"Education, especially public education, empowers and helps to develop a more socially just society, especially for those who are disadvantaged due to their socioeconomic background. Education helps build productive, engaged members of society who are able to contribute," Guv said. "It's a small investment for such big outcomes."

When members collectively invest their time in Federation campaigns, the strength in numbers can achieve huge, positive, system-wide effects for public education, students and teachers' conditions.

"Relief from face-to-face (RFF) teaching, executive release time, paid maternity and adoption leave, increased equality of pay for women, domestic violence leave, increased funding to public education, reduced class sizes to name just a few," Guv said.

"RFF was achieved due to a decade of collective, organised campaigning and two strike actions from teachers in the 1980s."

Guv's first experience as an active Federation member was during the ACTU's Your Rights at Work campaign — opposing the Howard government's industrial laws — when she marched and chanted on the streets of Blacktown alongside other unionists in 2006.

"I was not just a passive citizen but was joining with others to speak up against a government decision to erode workers' rights," she said.

"The result for me was the realisation of what the collective voice can achieve and the responsibility we each have to do what we can to ensure there is equity and protection for all, especially our most vulnerable.

"The overall result was that the protests raised public awareness and showed how strongly the planned legislation was opposed and enabled a change of government that promised to abolish the unfair legislation.



For the school funding campaigns Guv has sent emails to local MPs and encouraged colleagues, family and friends to do likewise. She handed out leaflets outside her school and at a voting booth, worn fair funding t-shirts to shops to raise awareness and attended a school funding forum.

“The Gonski and Fair Funding Now! campaigns are another example of what we can achieve by proactively joining with other organisations and citizens to play a pivotal, key role in helping to ensure social equity within our community and a fair go for our kids,” Guv said.

“There is a long way to go but campaigning ensured the acknowledgement that schools should be funded based on student need and a much-needed increase in public school funding.”

Members should contemplate that giving time to the Fair Funding Now! campaign may be a more effective way to achieve improved teaching and learning conditions in the long term than organising a school fundraiser, Guv said.

“When public education is properly funded, schools will have the funds to purchase relevant resources, freeing up teachers’ time.”

She is encouraged by the progress the school funding campaigning has already made to increase the resources in schools and believes more can be achieved for schools and TAFE funding when more members join their colleagues in campaign activities and thus strengthen Federation’s capacity to advocate for improvements.

Guv is Federation Representative at Barnier Public School and member of the school’s Federation Workplace Committee; and in the past, the Women’s Contact. Guv regularly attends Blacktown Teachers Association meetings and is a Federation Councillor.

She said she enjoys contributing to the greater good when she participates in Federation events.

“My actions are not just limited to within my class or school but by joining with others I am part of a bigger group whose goal is to improve education and social justice for all, especially our most vulnerable, the children,” she said.

“It is about stepping up and doing the right thing not just because it will benefit me personally.”

Guv participated in Federation’s Anna Stewart Program in term 4, 2019. “It definitely fulfils its role in empowering and enabling women in Federation,” she said. “It gave me the confidence to say yes when my Organiser asked me to convene one of the 5 December, 2019, school salaries meetings.

“I have learned so much and developed increased confidence to assist at both my school and association level to build the capacity of others and make teachers aware our influence and our ability to change things to benefit the public education system, our students and our own conditions rely on our collective participation in Federation campaigns,” Guv said.

[Learn more about the Anna Stewart Program](#)

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