

## Local teaching community welcomes input

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At the heart of discussions at Federation association meetings is the desire to maximise students' learning opportunities via improvements in teachers' working conditions.

Members from the local area come together, away from their workplaces, to discuss concerns about their working lives and help each other to make positive change.

"The general meeting notice says all members are welcome — that resonates with me," said Alex Thorburn, a casual teacher and a regular attendee at Ryde-Macquarie Teachers Association meetings.

"I have a sense that I'm contributing to the discussions and that I belong."

He encourages all members to attend their local association meeting. "If teachers don't fight against the erosion of their working conditions they will be lost," he warned. "If people speak up as a collective then higher up will back down. If no one says anything it gets pushed through and a precedent is set for something else to be eroded."

Alex often has dinner with other members following the meeting. "I've discovered from our discussions that other members have similar interests."



**Vivian Honan, a temporary teacher**, said she is "definitely coming back" after attending her first Ryde-Macquarie Teachers Association meeting, after commencing teaching this year at Ryde Secondary College.

"I moved a motion during the meeting. It was really exciting to have my say and to have the support from my comrades for my motion," she said.

"I thought everyone was really committed to the union's principles and I felt a great sense of solidarity."

She emboldens other members to come along to their association's meeting: "I think we all complain about the issues we face but if you want to see change you have to be involved and speak up, and the union is a democratic space where you can do that."

**Djoti Gurrier, Federation Representative** at Roselea Public School, said she's discovered by attending association meetings that other schools quite often have similar concerns.

Gurrier said she obtains valuable information from attending association meetings.

"I'm interested in campaigns that everyone can contribute to that will pressure the Department on workload

rather than pit teachers against executive,” she said. “Their workload is massive, our workload is massive. It’s the people at the top ... who are determining our workload.”

Commenting on her first Ryde-Macquarie Teachers Association meeting, **Rebecca Cantwell, Women’s Contact** at Roselea Public School, said she was quite excited by the level of passion and the right to voice her opinion.

“It was a supportive environment and a nice mix of age, and gender and primary/secondary balance,” she said. “I shared a common purpose with like-minded people.

“I’m really keen to be involved. I felt quite liberated and enthused. The offer of a subsidy for childcare resonated with me. I felt very supported and embraced.”

In addition to discussions about important issues affecting teachers in their workplace, such as workload, infrastructure, power outages and duty rosters, associations play an important role in formulating policy for Federation. Any financial member may draft a motion for the association to debate and vote on, and if the motion is successful, it can sometimes be presented for consideration by the union’s state Council.

Every Federation member is allocated to an association. Find out your association by looking at your membership card. Find out when your association is meeting next by checking the [events calendar](#) on Federation’s website.

**Kerri Carr** is a staff writer