

Workplace contacts

November 30, 2020

Natalie Amacha, Marrickville High School

Talk about the deep end and being thrown in head first! Natalie Amacha is a first-time Federation Representative in possibly the most chaotic school year in the history of the profession.

Teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has presented staff with a swathe of challenges and a Fed Rep role was vital to help smooth the way.

“COVID has been challenging due to the initial uncertainty and, at times, conflicting Department advice disseminated to teachers,” said Natalie, a special education teacher at Marrickville High School.

“Ensuring that staff felt supported during the transition to online learning and the transition back to face-to-face teaching presented challenges that I was able to successfully work through.

“Having fortnightly meetings with my principal to discuss Federation matters, COVID updates and to raise any concerns from members was very useful during this period.” A great effort, considering she only took on the Fed Rep role at the beginning of this year.

Natalie, a member of the Inner City Teachers Association, puts her early achievements down to her natural ability to communicate and, importantly, training she received from Federation.

“Ensuring that all staff felt heard and supported was the most challenging part of executing the role, especially because our Federation meetings could not take place face-to-face,” she said.

“I was fortunate enough to attend Fed Rep Trade Union Training, which provided me with great tools and strategies to support staff to overcome their challenges. I’ve learned that I am a good communicator and a pretty good problem solver.”

Her executive committee consists of four teachers across different faculties and with various levels of Federation and union experience, which has been vital during such an unprecedented year.

“Fortunately, we have not had many issues,” she said. “Some of the things I have had to deal with include explaining the importance of membership and convincing experienced teachers who have never been financial members to join. I managed to sign up one, and I am still talking to others.

“I’ve had member questions around timetabling, duties and allocations, concerns about online learning and



the expectations for staff, especially while some staff were still teaching some students face-to-face.

We have created an open line of communication between the Federation Committee and the principal, which has been extremely positive.”

Despite her baptism by fire, Natalie would encourage other teachers to become Fed Reps as an extension of the duty of care teachers have for their students to their colleagues.

“I have explained the personal benefits of membership, including access to the amazing CPL courses, and the importance of being part of a collective that continues to fight for public education,” she said. “So far, I have signed up three teachers.”