

Your voice is needed

April 06, 2021

Every day, as teachers, we try to be an example to our students. We want to inspire them to be caring global citizens, and your union is here to help you with that mission.

Since Federation's early days, members have voted to support a range of campaigns to reverse patterns of social inequality. The union is proud of members' participation in these campaigns and will continue to encourage you — along with your member colleagues — to challenge inequities and be part of transformational change. Read on to find out how your union has been part of the fight for social justice, and how you can participate and be the example you want to set.



Aboriginal rights

Aboriginal education was on the union's agenda in 1918.

In April 1967, Federation Council unanimously voted to recommend that members vote "yes" in the May referendum to remove discrimination against Aboriginal people from the Constitution, and invited teachers to offer their services to volunteer on polling day.

For many decades, Federation members have been pressuring governments to fairly address disadvantages experienced by generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in areas such as health and education.

Racism

The union's Anti-racism Charter states that all members have a responsibility to organise, oppose, act and educate against racism in all its forms. There are a variety of resources available on the website to assist teachers to reduce racism.

Federation also works with a range of community agencies to eliminate racism.

Migrants and refugees

The union has campaigned for governments to meet the needs of the state's multicultural communities. Members have been willing to take to the streets in protest over cuts to the provision of services.

An additional 104 full-time equivalent, specialist qualified English as an additional language or dialect positions were appointed in NSW public schools this year, following a sustained campaign by the union.

In 2018, Federation members lent their support to a campaign calling for the release of the 1100 asylum seeker children in detention on Nauru, in breach of article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Members attend the Sydney Palm Sunday Peace marches, which in recent years has focused on the rights of refugees.

Disability

Federation campaigns have asserted the need for governments to provide adequate resources to ensure the legislated rights of students with disability can be met.

Prisoners

Members have rallied for prisoners to have the right to be taught by fully qualified teachers.

Sex-based discrimination

Equal pay for equal work was on Federation's policy books from its inaugural year, 1918.

Members participated in the campaign against a law passed in 1932 that forced women teachers, lecturers and public servants to resign if they were married or intending to marry.

After a long campaign, women classroom teachers received equal pay for equal work in 1963. In 2008, assistant principals in primary schools (mostly women) received equal salary status with head teachers in secondary schools.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Federation advocated for same-sex attracted teachers who lost their jobs when they were arrested for homosexuality, a crime in NSW until 1984. Thankfully, due to the establishment of anti-discrimination law, teachers could no longer be fired for this reason.

Gender equality

For years Federation has spoken up for the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and/or queer (LGBTIQ) people. In 2011, Annual Conference resolved: "The discriminatory practices of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and monosexism are infringements of members' rights, the rights of students we teach and the rights of individuals within the communities in which we work, and must be challenged and eliminated."

The union encouraged members to vote "yes" in the 2017 marriage equality postal survey about legalising same-sex marriage.

Other areas of disadvantage

Needs based funding campaigns have sought to redress inequality experienced by socio- economically disadvantaged students, students in remote and small schools, students with disability, students with English as an additional language or dialect and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

UNION STRUCTURES IN SUPPORT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

Several of Federation's restricted committees work on developing social justice policy. These include the Aboriginal Education; Anti-racism; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer; Special Education and Women's and Anna Stewart Program restricted committees. Members of the committees are elected by Council.

A number of the union's special interest groups are interested in areas of social justice. These include the union's LGBTIQ; Peace, Environment and International Issues; and Refugee Education special interest groups. Meetings are held at Teachers Federation House. All interested members are welcome.

Visit our [website](#) for information about how to participate in meetings.

OFFICER APPOINTMENTS

The importance of social justice is recognised in the job descriptions of several elected officers. As part of their roles, the Women's Coordinator researches and organises activities related to gender equity, the Multicultural Officer/ Organiser coordinates anti-racism materials and campaigns, and the Aboriginal Education Coordinator deals with issues in relation to racism.