

## Mice motion shifts inertia

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Imagine mice running through your classroom and the stench of dead ones.

Due to a big grain harvest in parts of NSW, mice populations in parts of NSW have reached plague proportions, including in Gilgandra.

“It’s not just restricted to the farms, they’re coming into town,” said Gilgandra High School Fed Rep Bree Patton. “The mice find all the holes and find their way into classrooms.

“I’ve found a mouse in my drawer; we’ve had mice dying in the server cupboard and found dead mice on the carpet. Dead mice attract maggots; it’s really graphic.

“Multiple teachers were calling the [Incident Report and Support] hotline daily and we were being told that the Department had no policy for the baiting, trapping or disposing of the mice.”



Federation members felt they were getting nowhere, so they acted collectively, holding a Federation workplace meeting and passing a motion demanding the Department of Education provide a safe working and learning environment.

The motion — sent to Education Minister Sarah Mitchell — outlined that the mice infestation was impeding learning in subjects like Food Technology and Agriculture, causing damage to students’ HSC major works and school resources such as musical instruments and agricultural plants, plus staff and students were suffering psychological damage.

Members demanded extra funding to deal with the mice plague, for:

- additional cleaning services, including a deep clean of the school and regular cleaning before and during the school day
- additional cleaning products such as hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- installation and maintenance of baiting stations by a pest-control service
- air-tight storage boxes to store teaching resources.

“Within two hours of sending the motion the Director called the deputy principal to say they would find the money to reimburse the school for dealing with the mice,” Bree said.

“It shows just how quickly things can come together when we stand together and how the Department can listen when you show them the power of the union.”

Bree said the experience was motivation to achieve further changes via the same process.