

Association Spotlight: Canterbury Bankstown

March 01, 2018

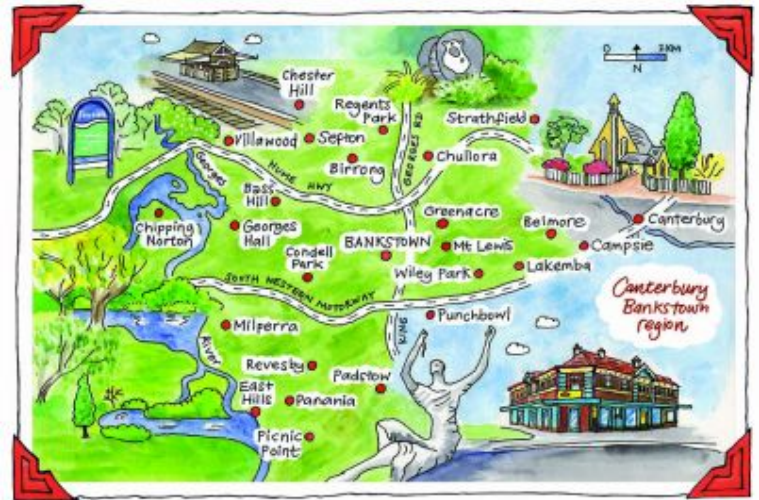
Number of members: 2182

President: Neelica Raffel

Secretary: John Morris

Our meetings We're a very supportive and welcoming Association. We have a good cross section of representation from primary, secondary, IEC and SSP settings and members have said they consider our meetings productive, efficient and interesting. It is also reported that the meetings are very well catered for. Association meetings are held Wednesdays, 10 days before council at Bankstown Senior College, and are generally very well attended with between 25 to 30 members. Over the past few years we have seen increasing numbers of new faces and a good turnover of Councillor positions and Executive roles.

We try to make sure each meeting notice has a topical item. Our current organiser Julie-Anne Moon, and former organisers, are important links, encouraging members with workplace issues to attend the meeting, and always on hand at the end of the association meetings to answer questions and advise on relevant and appropriate local action.



Our community The Association comprises 69 schools, many of which are in low SES areas with high migrant populations. The northern edges of the Association are mostly safe Labor seats. Once safe Labor seats in the state electorate of East Hills and federal electorate of Banks, have become marginal Liberal seats in the past two elections at each level. This is due to rising property values, second-generation migrant families increasingly accessing the professions (which is partly credit to the hard work of local teachers over the years) and redistributions towards the Georges River end of our area. Our local representatives include federal members Jason Clare (Labor, Blaxland) and Tony Burke (Labor, Watson) and MLAs Tania Mihailuk (Labor, Bankstown) and Sophi Cotsis (Labor, Canterbury).

Local issues Our schools and membership face many of the same issues concerning the profession across the state: inadequate funding and resourcing; workload and increases in non-teaching related work; more complex needs of students and diminished departmental support. South-western Sydney is not the most popular destination for some teachers, although the ones who come usually stay. The general population of the area tends to be low SES, high LBOTE but at the same time culturally rich. We've been seeing the introduction of more classes and units for students with disabilities in our area and subsequently greater need for specialist teachers and support staff.

Our teachers Our teachers are reflective of the community in many respects: culturally diverse and with a broad range of teaching experiences and skills. At meetings we see a good mix of high school and primary representation, IEC, special education, early-career and EALD teachers, as well permanent, temporary, casual staff and semi-retired members. This mix at meetings is represented in a much larger scale across the area's schools. We see many teachers traveling very long distances between home and work every day from all areas of Greater Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Central Coast.

Our focus Workload, especially what is arising from the increasing accountability regime, has been a regular

items of discussion. We hosted Senior Vice President Joan Lemaire at our 2017 annual workshop and dinner, to address issues of workload and NESA requirements. We look forward to a high level of engagement with the Workload Survey that has now been launched, and to how the union will hopefully affect change for teachers and our conditions on the basis of analysis of the data.

Schools funding is always on the radar and, of course, we're planning some centenary celebrations of our own, but we can't give too much away just yet!

We're in the throes of arranging to have the officer attached to the Special Education Committee, Claudia Vera, come to speak about all things related to students with special needs. We have increasing numbers of these students and teachers with lots of questions. Strong sound knowledge of policy and procedures, staffing and support, and the impact and the NDIS roll out is high on the interest scale.

Why come to our meetings? Other than the catering mentioned above, we have social events such as 10 pin bowling and lawn bowls. We also run workshops and invite guest speaker and have an annual dinner at the end of every year where we invite a senior officer to speak at the meeting before hand and join us for dinner afterwards. Access to a senior officer for grassroots members is a great way to make Federation more accessible and personal.

Our Association We are a fairly well-attended and diverse Association, which is reflected in our structure. We have a President, two Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, Women's Contact, Aboriginal Contact, LGBTIQ Contact, Special Ed Contact, Peace and Environment Contact, Casual and Retired Members Contact and a New Activist Contact.