

Your workplace contacts

March 01, 2018

Teaching in a small country community comes with its challenges but mainly rewards for Donna McLaughlan, Fed Rep at Canowindra Public School.

“Overall, I love teaching in the country,” she said. “I heartily recommend it.”

Ms McLaughlan moved away from Canowindra to teach in Sydney but was fortuitously offered a year’s work in her hometown.

“I drove back to Canowindra and started teaching the best first year out class you could ask for, meeting my husband soon after,” she said.

“My three children grew up here and still think of this place as their home and I have loved teaching in our school all these years.”

Canowindra, located between Orange and Cowra in the central west, is a smaller village outside of bigger centres.



“Our kids count and our staff are just as important but it is not until you travel to Sydney and see what is available for teachers in the bigger areas that you see how isolated we are,” Ms McLaughlan said.

“Having a Country Organiser who comes to meet our members and other staff, and put a familiar face on the union is vital, as well as providing opportunities for members to take part in conferences and professional training in bigger centres.

“Also being in a smaller community has made it more important to explain issues that arise for the whole community, and getting it to understand Federation supports its members but also wishes the best for their children.

“I found it particularly important to be able to go to P&C meetings to advise our community on issues like Gonski and school funding.”

Ms McLaughlan joined the union on leaving university, and with the casual work that comes with raising a family, has been associated with Federation for 30 years.

“Being the Fed Rep seemed a natural thing to do and important for staff,” she said. “We had some active Fed Reps who did the job for years.

“When they retired, it felt right to take on the position at my school. I know in the next few years the job will go to someone else but I will miss it. I have had to assist a staff member to get a pay that took weeks to come through and finally the union had to be involved.

“I have also worked with staff to assist with issues when mediation was necessary, but mostly I want my staff to feel they are not alone in their workplace.”

Ms McLaughlan said she was proud to be able to maintain good communications between the school, the staff and the community.

“The Fed Rep is very important in the school as they communicate vital information, support members when needed and often I feel they are a logical voice when we are entering into turbulent political times or are presented with uncertain agendas,” she said.

Beyond the school gates, Ms McLaughlan is a member of an acapella singing group in Bathurst that travels around the world, and also indulges her love of patchwork.

“Recently my husband [pictured] has taken on motorbike riding and we travel with friends to interesting places to eat delicious food, drink a little wine and listen to good music,” she said. “Most of all I enjoy time with our children and grandchildren.”