

## Your Workplace Contacts

May 14, 2018

**Pierre-Yves Dejean**  
Narraweena Public School

The resolution of a dispute at Narraweena Public School on the northern beaches inspired Federation Representative Pierre-Yves Dejean to coin a new union catchcry: "Divided we beg, united we bargain!"

"A few years ago, my principal came to tell me that the new resource allocation model for the school had been calculated and that the school would have to accept a rather important cut in the amount of learning support time we had," Mr Dejean said.

"Well, we didn't accept it! With the help of David, my organiser, we had my SED and a bunch of bureaucrats from the Department come to our school and tell us to our face.

"The meeting was tense and the SED could see that we were not happy. After much pressure from the staff and Federation the cut happened but much less than what was planned."

With a firm desire to help people, Mr Dejean has been a Fed Rep for as long as he can remember.

"In my third year of teaching at Green Valley near Liverpool there happened to be a little crisis in the school," he said. "The Fed Rep role was passed along to me and that was in 1999."

"I firmly believe that only a strong union can protect teachers and the public school system properly. The Fed Rep is the first link in the chain. He or she is the voice for those who too often choose to keep quiet because they think they are alone or are not heard because too many people around them make the wrong noise," Mr Dejean said.

"To me, it is a very important role. A school without a Fed Rep is a school without a voice, a school cut off from the rest of the union, a school in which even members of the union do not know or understand what Federation is doing for them every day."

He hopes his passion and enthusiasm for the post will be enough to encourage colleagues to follow in his footsteps.

"I think the best encouragement I could give other members is by doing my Fed Rep job the best I can, and always being enthusiastic in what I am doing," he said.

"By jumping on every opportunity to tell, show and explain to my colleagues how much of an important and exciting job it is, by reminding them as often as I can, how important it is to have an active Fed Rep in the school when things go wrong, and finally by making them realise that you can't always leave it to others to



take responsibility for doing something.”

The importance of the Fed Rep role can be borne out by some of the most workaday problems that confront teachers.

“Until last year, my colleagues and I were asked to stay back every Tuesday afternoon (outside hours of duty) for Teacher Professional Learning (TPL),” Mr Dejean said. “There was never a break and we were often told what the training was about at the last second. There was never any consultation.

“I went to see the principal and, with the support of my Workplace Committee, changed that for the best. We now have a couple of Tuesday afternoons off every term to use the way we like and we know at the beginning of each term what the TPL will be about as well as how it is relevant to our everyday work.

“We now also have only one Tuesday morning staff meeting every fortnight instead of every week.”

The Narraweena school community and its parents are dogged by many of the concerns of the wider public education system.

“Too many parents believe they are powerless in having our school better funded; I keep talking about what the Gonski reforms would have done and the way we can finally have public schools properly funded according to needs by voting well at the next Federal election,” Mr Dejean said.

“For teachers, there is also the issue of workload and more consultation at the school level where very often decisions regarding classroom teachers are taken by the so called “executive” circle without any consultation.

“Classroom teachers must reclaim their pride; we are the ones doing the hard work of teaching children every day.

“Finally, the ever-growing administrative, data-collecting tasks required of us when our primary business is teaching. Collecting data for the benefit of the children yes of course, for the sakes of politicians to use for their own agenda no way!”

This is where the power of the union and a collective voice can be an effective weapon of change, Mr Dejean said.

“I don’t trust politicians and bureaucrats for making the right decisions when it comes to education in this country,” he said. “I do not believe their first interest is to have a free, fair public education of quality in NSW and other states.

“They have their own agenda: political gain and their own advancement for personal glory and a better pay cheque at the end of the year.

“My only concern and interest as a unionist is to make sure that every single child in this country has a fair go no matter his or her race, socio-economic background, the country he/she comes from, his/her religion or whatever else. A fair go for all!”