

## Unity! Strength! Justice!

June 18, 2018

A highlight of Federation's centenary celebrations will be an exhibition honouring its proud 100-year history of support for teachers and their students, schools and communities.

The exhibition *Unity! Strength! Justice! 100 Years of the NSW Teachers Federation* will be on display at Teachers Federation House in Surry Hills for three weeks from Monday 24 September, 2018 — just in time for the school holidays.

Exhibition curator Susan Charlton and designer Jakk Hodson are collaborating on content and design to transform Teachers Federation House into a dynamic display, research and project space, even making use of the Reservoir Street windows and entry stairs to attract and engage audiences.

*Unity! Strength! Justice!* draws from Federation's rich archival collections, written histories, and collective memories to chart the story from its beginnings in 1918, when a group of determined women and men from existing NSW teachers' associations gathered together in Sydney and confirmed their intention to become one union.



It's a lively 100-year history of campaigning and activism, from the long-time equal pay struggle of the 20th century to the Fair Funding Now! campaign of today. Items on display will include a beautiful, handwritten register listing the first members of Federation in 1919, painted protest banners from mass rallies, picket lines and campaigns in the 1980s, and 20 years of posters for the annual Aboriginal Members Conference.

Ms Charlton, who comes from a family with several generations of teachers, began her working life teaching in Adelaide high schools. She comes to the centenary exhibition after 14 years as creative producer at NSW State Archives and Records and freelance projects, including the Feminism and Film program for last year's Sydney Film Festival and the recent Museum of Love and Protest for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

Though Ms Charlton remembers the role of contemporary Federation leaders Jennie George and Sharan Burrow from their strong presence in the media, she has been delighted to discover the generations of extraordinary women campaigners who came before them.

"There's something wonderfully subversive about women, photographed in their floral frocks, hats, pearls and handbags, who were actually strong activists for social change and social justice," she said.

"Women such as Beatrice Taylor and Lucy Woodcock are a complete revelation to me. Reading Beatrice Taylor's oral history held in the Federation library, conveys a great deal about her character and personality.

"She memorably described herself as having to be 'half actress, half artist' to capture the attention of her class of 70 students when she was a young 17-year-old teacher. Her story is just one of many in the exhibition."