

# ***BOLD***



## ***WOMEN & LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER***



# HEAR US ROAR

CHRISTINE COOPER, IEUA ASSISTANT FEDERAL SECRETARY



IEU Women and Equity Committee meet with Unions NSW

Australia had a chance to make workplaces safer and free from sexual harassment and abuse. But our Federal Government failed us.

Back in March, IEU Women joined the March4Justice rally to protest how inadequately sexual assault and harassment was dealt with – not just within the Parliament sphere but also more broadly across all areas of Australian Society.

Contrary to what some media commentators said at the time, we had more than just anger, we had solutions. We had the Respect@Work Report – the landmark report from Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins. A compelling blueprint for safer workplace with 55 recommendations for change that were widely supported by stakeholders.

Yet this month, the Federal Government failed us. The Parliament Bill ‘Respect@Work’ – do not be misled by its name – was nothing more than a watered-down version of the report’s recommendations. A pure political marketing manoeuvre to appear that action was being taken.

The Federal Government failed to include into the Bill the key recommendations from the report, which would have extended women’s rights and employers’ obligations to prevent harassment.

Our workplace laws needed a clear prohibition on sexual harassment and a quick and effective way of resolving complaints. The Federal Government failed to provide this. The Bill proposed a process that can only be used by current employees about current harassment allegations, where they must prove ongoing harm. It is difficult for a woman to make a complaint after they’ve left the workplace. Laws without any effective way of enforcing them are just words on a page. The Federal Government failed to provide 10 days paid domestic violence leave.

The Federal Government plainly missed the opportunity to address the national crisis of sexual harassment and violence. This is an insult to all women who have fought to make workplaces safer. But we will not surrender this fight – we will continue to roar.

# IN CONVERSATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH LORETTA COTTER, FORMER IEU VICTAS DEPUTY SECRETARY

**Tell us about the journey which led you to being a BOLD IEU Woman leader. What inspired you to take a leadership role?**

I think that there was never a lightbulb moment when I said, 'I'm going to work for the union and become a leader'. That was never in my thinking. When I was younger, I just wanted to have interesting jobs.

However, I always had a strong sense of wanting to give back, shaped probably by my upbringing. I grew up in a matriarchy, with six sisters, two brothers, a quiet and gentle father and a dominant mother; it was a family where social justice was drilled into us from an early age. While I found some aspects of my Catholic upbringing suffocating, the emphasis on values and giving back to your community was a solid foundation. I worked as a teacher in the Catholic system for several years, before moving into adult education.

The most critical thing that motivated me to apply for a job with IEU VICTAS was that I'd been working casual/sessional jobs in the university and TAFE sector, and as much as I loved the work, I was tired of insecure employment. This experience made me advocate strongly about insecure and casual employment in later years.

I probably would never have applied for the IEU VICTAS job except that I'd been a rep in my previous Catholic secondary school, so the union was familiar to me. I had a great relationship with the organiser and there was a lot of contact. And I didn't think I would get the job, so I wasn't nervous!



**Why did you move to the IEU's federal office, then back to the Victorian branch?**

As much as I'd loved my job as a combined Education Officer and organiser, the pace was often frenetic and stressful. Between supporting members and reps and working on policy and research there was never time to draw breath. Time for extended writing or thinking was hard to find.

So, the opportunity to take on something different in the national environment appealed. It was a challenging move – there were only 4 people – Lyne Rolley the federal secretary, me, and two admin staff, Meagan and Izabela. It was great experience in new areas of the Union's work, such as co-ordinating the casual loading case in the ELICOS sector and supporting the Northern Territory Branch. I grew a lot in the federal job.

However, there were times also when I missed the energy and collegiality of a bigger organisation.

The decision to come back to the Victorian Branch was guided by several of my colleagues who directly approached me and encouraged me to put my hat in the ring for a casual vacancy that had arisen. Knowing there was a solid group of colleagues who lobbied for me made that a step I wanted to take.

**How did you combine your jobs with being a parent?**

When I had my son in 2001, I went part-time for the only time in my life, and with the federal office's support, I was able to maintain that for 4 years. I also had 100% support from my partner. We discussed the Federal and Deputy Secretary roles in depth. There was a reality about what the job would involve and what might fall to him to pick up. And he did.

**What would you tell your younger self?**

To not be so afraid. You can do it. I often lacked self-confidence and asked myself, 'can I really do this? Do I have the skills?' I'd remind myself that you don't have to be perfect at everything to do your job well.

I was a very nervous public speaker and I often had to stand up before big meetings and address members. That part of the job was enormously challenging; I would be shaking. And it never really got any easier. But I now know I can do it.

I have learned so much, either organically by teaching myself or watching others. I paid attention to great role models – Lyne in the federal job and Deb James in Victoria. They were great colleagues. They were supportive and showed me the ropes.

I would tell my younger self that the skills of a teacher translate to a union job. You don't have to be an industrial encyclopedia. Union jobs are about empathy, values, listening, support, clear communication, and speaking for people. Finally, I'd say that you can be an introvert and still be a leader – it takes all types!

**What advice would you give people applying for a union position?**

Become known to the union – engage in its processes and structures. It helps a lot if we have seen you around, and organisers speak highly about you. Many reps have also become known to us through being on our Committee of Management – this experience can be invaluable because you get to know the inner workings of the union, and we get to know you.

**What can the union do to encourage more women into IEU roles?**

When we hire new employees, we often advertise full-time positions. The time fractions of many of these jobs should be negotiable, so they don't rule out applicants who need a more flexible role because they have obligations including family. Applicants for exclusively full-time roles are overwhelmingly male.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH LORETTA COTTER, FORMER IEU VICTAS DEPUTY SECRETARY

We should consider offering more support to women applicants we wish to encourage – providing constructive feedback and tips on how to address job criteria and submit the best possible applications.

The language of these job ads is also important. Do we exclude capable applicants by making the job sound too hard or too industrial? Where do we say the job is located? After learning so much during pandemic lockdowns, we have a greater capacity to foster a Work from Home policy that benefits women with caring responsibilities. This should be reflected when we try to attract new personnel.

We should maintain and constantly upgrade rep training to ensure a talented, committed, engaged and knowledgeable pool of future organisers. And we should also keep encouraging more women to become reps, and to get elected to the Committee of Management.

Refining and changing processes is a task, but well within our capacity. The gender lens should be cast over everything we do.

### **Do you support quotas?**

I support gender quotas in union structures. We have achieved that for the Federal IEU Council, and quotas would work well for other areas such as the Committee of Management. Given our membership profile, it is surprising that Deb and I were the only all-female leadership team across the branches. The majority of reps in our workplaces are women, with the exception of Victorian Catholic secondary schools (46% women). In Victoria, we currently have 7 women and 8 male organisers. Five of the women organisers have at various times been part-time in the role. It's 50-50 in the industrial staff and 3 of our 4 project officers are female.

### **Final words?**

As Gloria reflected in the last BOLD newsletter, there is still so much more to be done. Women's retirement income, pay equity, gendered violence, flexible working arrangements – the task can sometimes seem insurmountable. Sometimes it feels like we are having the same fight all over again. We must stay strong, united, and passionate. In other words, be BOLD women.



# *BOLD AROUND THE COUNTRY*

## *IEU NSW/ACT*

PAM SMITH, ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Congratulations to Kylie Booth-Martinez (pictured here with Michelle O'Neil ACTU President) who has recently been elected to the NSWACT Branch Executive. Kylie is a proud Wiradjuri woman and is the first Aboriginal woman elected the Branch Executive and works in both Catholic systemic and independent schools in Bathurst.

The NSW/ACT Women and Equity committee has, COVID permitting, planning in place for some IEU regional women's events later this year, including:

- North West women's forum via Zoom on 3 September, with guest speaker the Deputy Mayor of Armidale Debra O'Brien
- Western Sydney women's forum on 4 November hosted at Penola Catholic College at Emu Plains, with Natalie Lang from the Australian Services Union as guest speaker.

At our June NSW ACT Branch Council, a Gender Respect and Consent Panel was convened in response to a Bill before NSW Parliament, the "Parental Primacy Bill", which restricts any discussion of gender diversity or fluidity issues in schools. The panel discussed how we talk about gender, and respect and consent in schools.

### **I'm Every Woman: BOLD Support Staff Leading Change**

On 9 August, a highly successful IEU BOLD webinar BOLD Support Staff Leading Change



was attended by more than 45 BOLD IEU women from across the country in attendance. The webinar was facilitated by NSW/ACT and appreciation is expressed to IEU Industrial Officer, Carolyn Moore for her efforts in arranging this event.

The webinar featured NSW/ACT support staff members, Carolyn Collins, Learning Support Assistant, Belinda McRae, School Administrative Officer, Karen Andriske, Aboriginal Education Worker, as well as Marit Clayton, Organiser, IEU VICTAS, Andrea Hines, IEU VICTAS Committee of Management and Tracey Spiel, Project Officer, IEU VICTAS

Through their stories, IEU BOLD support staff members lay proof that they are leaders and BOLD participants readily identified with the issues and experiences raised by the presenters.

# *BOLD AROUND THE COUNTRY*

## *IEU QNT*

CARYL ROSSER, ORGANISER AND ELISE CUTHBERTSON, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



IEU QNT BOLD members are excited to celebrate one of our BOLD conference participants, Aleshia Connellan, who has been recently elected as IEU-QNT president. The BOLD community also welcomes Elise Cuthbertson to the Federal IEU Women and Equity Committee.

### **Women's Conference**

Our first online women's conference Be BOLD For Change was held on 19 August 2021. The online conference was a great way to connect IEU QNT women from across Queensland and the Northern Territory to learn and reflect on workplace issues that impact on them as women. The Conference was a series of informative and interactive workshops on empowering women at work and focused on such issues as reproductive health, gendered violence, mental health and coercive control,

with the aim to building safe and respectful workplaces and achieving change through action.

### **Inclusive Education**

A training session was held for members about best practices for inclusive classroom education to support students who identify LGBTIQ+. The external training provider, True Inclusive Education, conducted the session online for 60 members during school holidays. It launched from a base level of education by explaining a lot of the terminology. It was also very practical and provided some examples of best practice tips for our members.

### **Gendered Violence Training**

Gendered Violence Training is continuing to be delivered and recently we were invited to conduct a full staff training at one of the Catholic schools in Ipswich where they will train approximately 80 staff.

### **Reproductive Health**

Our branch is very excited to have now finalised our position on reproductive health and will now start raising the issue at the negotiating table. This clause will allow staff who are going through the different stages of reproductive health to access paid leave to attend to health matters such as menopause, fertility treatments (for men or women), pregnancy appointments or periods.

# *BOLD AROUND THE COUNTRY*

## *IEU SA*

LOUISE FIRRELL, ASSISTANT SECRETARY

The SA BOLD group remain very active, despite ongoing limitations from COVID 19.

Professional Development 2021 saw the return of the SA BOLD Feminism in Pub. The first event held in Term 2 involved a presentation by Abby Kendall, the coordinator from the Women's Centre, who spoke about reproductive rights and leave, which was a conversation starter and everyone that generated a lively discussion.

Our Women's Professional Learning Day which we have run for the last few years and will hopefully be face to face on October 8. It has proven to be so popular that this year we have had to find a larger venue than we have at the IEU.

This year we also managed again to hold the Women's dinner before another lock down! The only problem was that with current Covid restrictions we couldn't accommodate everyone who wanted to come! We were hosted by the wonderful women at Sparkke on Whitmore and had the amazing Sally Scales as our guest speaker. Sally is a young Pitjantjatjara woman from the APY lands in remote SA. She is the youngest person ever elected as Chairperson of the APY Executive Board Council and has opened an art gallery in Sydney and another in Adelaide, for the women from her community to exhibit and sell their artwork. She is a fearless advocate for her community and was an inspiration to those who had the privilege to listen to her.



# *BOLD AROUND THE COUNTRY*

## *IEU VICTAS*

THERESE O'LOUGHLIN AND MARIT CLAYTON, ORGANISERS

IEU women have continued the work make their workplaces safe and free from discrimination and gendered violence (GV). More groups of women in our schools have conducted IEU Women's Rights at Work (WRAW) chats and through these guided conversations identified an 'agenda for change'. The data we are collecting through this process will help us provide further support for members to enact change in their workplace.



### **A Gender Lens on bargaining**

The following have been included in the Log of Claims for Catholic schools and the IEU is working with members and bargaining reps in independent schools to include these claims.

- An increase in paid parental leave
- An increase in paid partner leave
- A reasonable spread of hours for part time employees
- Payment of superannuation on parental leave
- Increased family and domestic violence leave
- Gendered violence and sexual harassment terms which commit the employer to zero tolerance of both in the workplace.



### **Organise for Equality**

All women deserve to be safe, respected and equal in all the places we work. Yet still today, our work is not recognised or valued. Enough is enough. It's time for women from all industries, from all unions, from all communities to come together, get organised and step up the fight. On 26 August 2021, hundreds of working women including some of our Vic BOLD women came together online to launch the 'Organise for Equality' campaign and take our first big action together for Equal Pay Day. The SAFE RESPECTED EQUAL campaign is organised by the We Are Union Women team at Vic Trades Hall.

Congratulations to IEU VICTAS woman, Kylie Busk, on her appointment to Assistant Secretary and a big congratulations to our General Secretary Deb James on her election as President of the Victorian Trades Hall Council. It is fabulous to see union women stepping up and leading our movement – especially IEU BOLD women!

# *BOLD AROUND THE COUNTRY*

## *IEU WA*

BOLD WELCOMES JULIA ARMITT, ENQUIRIES OFFICER, TO THE FEDERAL WOMEN & EQUITY COMMITTEE

The WA Branch is presently undertaking a review of our BOLD network and considering how we can engage more IEU WA women to strengthen and grow our network. Co-ordinating the Committee and review process is staff member Julia Armitt, Enquiries Officer, assisted by Branch Executive member and ATSI Committee Chair Maxine Brahim, who is a Coordinator in the Catholic sector. The Branch is currently reviewing previous BOLD activities and processes and working on new ways to promote BOLD among our membership, drawing from initiatives and experience of other IEU Branches.



As part of our review process, we are also seeking to establish better networking opportunities for BOLD and women members via events we are considering such as Securing Your Future - a proposed event in partnerships with Slater and Gordon & Non-Government Super, as well as planning ahead for International Women's Day in 2022. We are also seeking to network our ATSI Committee and BOLD Committee.

At present Catholic Bargaining for Teachers is the key focus in our Branch, and we are proud to say that our EBA Bargaining Team consists of a majority of wonderful and determined women delegates from metropolitan and regional schools.

Industrially, we are continuing to advocate for many members unfairly employed on rolling fixed term contracts, to convert to permanent roles (those affected are often women Education Assistants and Teachers) and have had several successful outcomes for members in 2021. Branch Organising in schools also seeks to focus on being genuinely representative of our membership.

We are very pleased to have two BOLD women as members of the Branch Executive, Maxine Brahim and Saida Khan. Saida is our first Executive member from an Islamic school, who also works with an active group of women and male Delegates, as we all work towards achieving a first time EBA.

# ***BOLD WOMEN STEP UP TO LEADERSHIP***

Congratulations to the IEU SA BOLDies, Jenny Johnson, Kathleen Johnson and Ally Cunningham, who have recently been elected in the IEU SA Executive Committee.



## **Jenny Johnson**

Jenny is a secondary teacher with career longevity in the public, Catholic and Independent school's sector. Her support and advocacy of staff has been demonstrated through a commitment to involvement in the Consultative Committee, the Finance Committee, being a contact officer and an IEUSA school representative. In 2020, Jenny was recognised as the IEUSA representative of the year which was supported by her participation in the Anna Stewart Memorial Program, displaying a strengthening of her understanding of how to continue to develop a unified, collective and democratic organisation. She is a proud BOLDie!

## **Kathleen Johnson**

Kathleen has a wealth of teaching experience and leadership experience at Blackfriars Priory School and other Catholic schools in the region. She has been involved with several restructures at her workplace (where redundancies were required). She also instigated the establishment of the

Consultative Committee at Blackfriars and was its secretary for many years. Kathleen feels a keen affiliation with the IEU Bold network.

## **Ally Cunningham**

As a unionist of many years, Ally has taught in the Government and Non-government sectors both in nationally and internationally. Ally Continues to support her colleagues and members as the Union Rep at her school; as a member of the Equity Committee; by participating in Anna Stewart Memorial Program and participating in the IEU BOLD program.

We also congratulate Emily Button who also put forward her nomination for the positions. Disappointingly, there were only three open positions and we encourage Emily to continue her interests by nominating again in the near future.

As we all know, a woman's place is on her union's governing body.

# 2021 BOLD WEBINARS

CARYL ROSSER, IEU QNT ORGANISER

AND ELISE CUTHBERTSON, IEU QNT COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



**BOLD Webinars** are continuing via online Zoom sessions. These BOLD sessions provide an opportunity not only to speak with some amazing feminists and gain professional development on issues affecting women, but they also provide an opportunity to network with other IEU BOLD women from across the country.

## **Reproductive Health and Menopause: What Needs to Change at Work**

World Menopause Day on Monday, 18 October 2021 is an important opportunity to raise awareness of menopause – and reproductive health more broadly.

It is also an opportunity to acknowledge that reproductive health is a workplace issue. Most women will experience reproductive health concerns related to conditions like menstruation, perimenopause, menopause, pregnancy, endometriosis, poly-cystic ovarian syndrome, hysterectomy, In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) or other forms of assisted reproductive health services.

For far too long, women have suffered the burden of these conditions without adequate support at work.

They have found themselves ‘pushing through’ and working when they are unwell, exhausting their sick leave or suffering financially when they need to withdraw from the workplace.

It’s time to change this. New campaigns are fighting for support and paid leave to be provided to any employees experiencing reproductive health issues. This workshop will help women to navigate reproductive health challenges in their working lives, explore the types of workplace support needed and seek to destigmatise the issue of women’s health at work.

## **Workshop presenters**

Thea O’Connor is a senior advisor on workplace wellbeing and productivity, helping leaders, teams and individuals improve their workplace engagement and effectiveness through body intelligence and better health. She draws on 25 years of experience in health promotion including in the fields of nutrition (as a dietitian), body image, sleep science and workplace health.

Contact your IEU Women and Equity Committee member for the webinar Zoom details.

