

BOLD



WOMEN & LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER



"COURAGE CALLS TO COURAGE EVERYWHERE, AND ITS VOICE CANNOT BE DENIED"

- MILLICENT FAWCETT



CHRISTINE COOPER, ACTING FEDERAL SECRETARY

If someone was to comment on how courageous we were – how many of us would readily deny it with a “oh no”. Yet, when we consider the many challenges that women have overcome, not just in the past but also this year during the pandemic, what else could we call ourselves but courageous?

From the moment that the pandemic hit, BOLD IEU women have stepped up to ensure that their families and their colleagues and the children they teach were protected and supported. They faced the many snap lockdown decisions with resilience. BOLD IEU women have shown that they are adaptable. The fact that they continue to meet the various challenges that have occurred in schools, to firstly operate under a pandemic, then to manage transitions to remote education, to conduct that remote

education and then to resume operations under a COVID 19 safe environment – all the while balancing home and work demands - is nothing short of remarkable.

The story behind the scenes of lockdown is also one that sadly demands courage. The impact of COVID 19 has seen an increase in the incidences of gendered violence. The pandemic is placing greater financial, health, and domestic pressures on households and at the same time increasing women’s isolation and reducing their financial and job security.

There was a plan to make work and home safer, especially for women. The landmark Australian Human Rights Commission Respect@Work report has 55 recommendations to create stronger rights to eliminate violence and harassment. Instead

the Morrison Government sat on this report for over a year before putting to Parliament a Bill, which ignored the very recommendations that would have ensured the safety of women.

The Morrison Government is playing games! They make announcements and try to look like they are addressing the issue by putting forward watered-down Bills or holding national women summits where women are spoken at but never listen to!

They have failed to bring in NES safety net provisions for paid family and domestic leave. They have failed to ratify ILO C190 on violence in the workplace. They have failed to strengthen the powers of the Sex Discrimination Commission, or even to provide sufficient funding to support women's centres. The list goes on. The reality is

the Morrison Government is simply trying to look like they are doing things – not to support women but to pacify. It won't work!

We know from history that campaigning women, noisy women, BOLD women are change makers. It is our courage that brings about change.

We Won't Wait is the rally cry for support to prevent violence against women. We can no longer wait for the Morrison Government to have an epiphany and actually start to support women. We need change.

There is a federal election on our horizon and it must be in our sights. Let's take on the courage of those sisters who came before us. Let's walk in their shoes and have the necessary conversations to organise the vote for change.

COURAGE
CALLS TO
COURAGE
EVERYWHERE

IN CONVERSATION: TWO BOLD IEU LEADERS



IEUA Acting Federal Secretary Christine Cooper and IEU-QNT Assistant Secretary Rebecca Sisson are two leaders carving their own paths in the union movement. They talk to each other about their journey to leadership positions, finding their voices as leaders and what good leadership is.

Christine: So, first of all, we both found unionism in different ways. As a graduate teacher, my school had a strong union culture and it was there I learnt the power of the collective – what we can achieve when we stick together and raise our voices.

Rebecca: Yes. I wouldn't say I came from a union family; however, at university I was introduced to some pro-union lecturers and I developed a passion for unionism. I knew I wanted to work within the movement. In February 2005 I applied for a graduate position as a Research Officer for our union, then known as the QIEU, and I've been here in a variety of roles ever since. I now occupy a role you once held here. Did you aspire to be a leader?

Christine: No, not in a direct or deliberate sense. However, my mother taught me a valuable lesson that stays with me to today: 'if not me, then who?' In the beginning, someone needed to step into a Chapter Rep role – we

had issues that needed solving and I thought I could make a change. From there, my journey into union leadership went from Rep, to Queensland Branch President, then Organiser, then Assistant Secretary/ Treasurer to, finally, my current role in the IEUA Federal Officer as Assistant Secretary.

Rebecca: I didn't specifically aspire to leadership either. At the time, I was the Membership Development Officer and I thought I had found my 'home' so to speak. I was comfortable and knew I had the skills and knowledge to perform to a high level. When the suggestion came that I might consider something more... it took a lot of consideration about whether I was ready to step out of my comfort zone. I also had a really young family and I was only 30; I felt I didn't have the experience and although it was hard, I feel it was the right move and I've since made the Assistant Secretary position my own.

Christine: I don't think anyone is ever really prepared to step into leadership. I've been in various leadership positions at the IEU for over two decades and sometimes I still don't feel prepared. I have nothing to fear now in admitting that and accepting it has taken a lot of pressure off me. How do you approach your leadership role and do you have times when you struggle?

Rebecca: It's hard, particularly as a mother. Over time I've learnt not to beat myself up and try my best to balance all my responsibilities and obligations. I've accepted that I can't do everything at the level I would want to all the time.

Finding my voice as a leader has helped though. I did this by identifying my strengths and owning those things. I had to think 'What am I good at? What skills do I have that add value to our union and our members?' I know that when people come to me for advice or support, I can make an informed and respected decision. I'm not a necessarily loud voice but I aim to be a confident and strong one.

Christine: I agree. I think a big challenge of leadership is trusting your voice and what needs to be said. As another BOLD Leader recently said, you don't have to be 100% perfect, you just have to do it. In saying that though, I believe there are unique challenges for women in leadership positions. In my opinion, the public perception of women leaders needs to drastically change. We are criticised not just for any decisions we make but for our physical appearance, the way we speak and what we wear to an extent that men aren't.

Rebecca: Due to that level of scrutiny, I feel women leaders have extra pressure to do all and be all in their jobs, but it's just not possible. We have to start normalising the idea we cannot be perfect and we will make mistakes, but that doesn't mean we are not capable leaders. As I mentioned before, I also feel the pressure and expectations of motherhood on top of those as a leader. I'm lucky, in a sense, that having children hasn't set me back at work and that my husband and I are a team. Unfortunately, that isn't the

case for all women and it's a major challenge to careers in general, let alone pursuing leadership positions.

Christine: I have only learnt this recently, but the best piece of advice I've received to overcome some of the challenges of leadership is to let yourself make mistakes. Own them, don't hide from them and learn from them, build structures, processes from them to support you.

Rebecca: Absolutely. A piece of advice I live by is you don't have to turn up to every fight you are invited to. As a leader, there are problems coming at you constantly. I used to think I had to get involved and resolve every problem. Now, unless it's urgent, I let the problem sit, collect my thoughts and then act if I need to. Most of the time, resolutions occur without intervention or are very simple to fix with a bit of time and space.

Christine: On that note, what do you think good leadership is?

Rebecca: Collaborative leadership. Any leader who thinks they have all the skills and knowledge they need is going to have a tough time. I always see leadership as a team effort, and I don't ask my team to do something I wouldn't do myself if needed. I believe the best things happen in a collaborative, open space. What is good leadership to you?

Christine: I agree with you about collaborative leadership – after all it focusses on our union values of solidarity and collective action, doesn't it? I also strongly believe that leadership isn't about just a position. It isn't a noun, but a verb. It is about action and taking people with you on that journey. So yes; if not us, then who? If not now, then when?

BOLD AROUND THE COUNTRY

IEU NSW/ACT

PAM SMITH, ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND VALERIE JONES, ORGANISER

IEU NSW/ACT is campaigning with the ACTU, Unions NSW and Unions ACT to achieve ten days of paid family and domestic violence leave in the NES.

The 16 Days of Action commence on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and concludes on Human Rights Day, 10 December. The focus is on ending violence in the home, the workplace and in the community. Both days will be recognised by the IEU and other unions as significant reminders of the need to prevent and address all forms of discrimination, harassment, and violence in at work and in the community.

Family and domestic violence is a national crisis. On average a woman is killed each week by a partner, ex-partner or family member. On top of this tragedy hundreds of thousands of nearly always women and young people face violence at home. The pandemic has exacerbated this crisis and has to a very large extent further trapped these survivors in abusive relationships.

Workplaces play a vital role in assisting people who are in violent and abusive relationships break the cycle. Paid leave, supportive employers and vital services can provide financial support and guidance which enables them to find a secure pathway out of a devastating existence.

To date the Federal Government is yet to support the right for all workers to get paid leave family and domestic violence leave and have it embedded in the NES.



IEU NSW/ACT BOLD members show their support for this vital and very much needed addition to the NES in a screen shot for social media.

Other BOLD IEU NSW/ACT Women activities Efforts continue to strengthen current IEU/Diocesan WGE committees and to reactivate others, as well as monitoring the annual reports from non-government sector employers to WGEA. This includes a focus on addressing gender pay gap issues in classification and opportunities for progression.

The Western Sydney women's forum was held on 4 November via Zoom, with Natalie Lang from the Australian Services Union (and a Blue Mountains resident) as guest speaker.

Originally organised for July in Wollongong, "The Women of Steel" film screening has been rescheduled as an online South Coast women's forum event on 2 December at 5.00pm.

IEU SA

LOUISE FIRRELL, IEU SA ASSISTANT SECRETARY



A large group of IEU women members, from a cross-section of school sectors and cultures, spent the last Friday of the October term break taking advantage of 6 hours of free professional learning and networking.

The line-up of speakers was exceptional. The professional learning day began with a Zoom Presentation by IEU QNT Organiser, Caryl Rosser, and Communications Officer, Elise Cuthbertson, on gender issues and women's safety in the workplace. It was an insightful presentation starting with children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes in their school. This was followed by Allegra Stock, an audiologist who talked about

IEU WA

REBECCA COLLOPY, IEU WA BRANCH SECRETARY

The WA Branch is presently undertaking a review of our BOLD network and considering how we can engage more IEU WA women to strengthen our network. Until recently, co-ordinating the Committee and review process was staff member Julia Armit, Enquiries Officer, ably assisted by Branch Executive member and ATSI Committee Chair Maxine Brahim, who is a Coordinator in the Catholic sector. Julia has taken up a new position as the WHS Officer at UnionsWA. We thank her for her amazing contributions and congratulate her new role. The Branch is currently reviewing previous BOLD activities and processes and working on new ways to promote BOLD among

effective ways to support a teacher's most essential tool, their voice. Elaine Santos from NGS Super took the group through to the lunch break with a succinct and informative look at the superannuation landscape and what NGS could offer its members.

The final presentation of the day was from Madhavi Nawana Parker, who runs a consultancy Positive Minds, and has worked extensively with children and teachers to foster their well-being. She has also written extensively on the topic and was an engaging presenter on a fundamentally important subject. All attendees received a certificate of attendance for professional learning.

members, 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 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 also have plans 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.

IEU VICTAS

THERESE O'LOUGHLIN AND MARIT CLAYTON, ORGANISERS



Well, 2021 was not the year we had hoped it would be way back in January and once again IEU women had to embrace flexibility and change, often at the last minute. There was plenty of pivoting, postponing, and re-jigging of events and activities but we managed to achieve a lot in the women and equity space as well as having some events and ideas 'ready to roll' in 2022.

Launch of SAFE RESPECTED EQUAL Campaign

In 2021 VTHC Women's Team launched this campaign to win better conditions and cultures for working women of all colours, cultures and experiences. It was to be launched at the Women's rights at Work Conference on 23 July which turned out to be the first day of Melbourne's sixth (and hopefully last) lockdown. The launch was moved online and the conference postponed.

A good number of IEU BOLD women participated in the online meetings and began the work of organizing for change through:

- Activism at a workplace level - to fight for gender equality and clauses for gendered violence prevention and paid family violence leave and provisions for women's

equality and rights (see below for work IEU has been doing in independent school bargaining around this).

- Activism to change systems - to campaign publicly for recognition and value of women's unpaid labour including for funding free universal access to childcare, early childhood educators and carers' paid fair wages and addressing the gender pay gap more broadly.
- Activism to change the conversation and drive cultural change in Australia through media, social media and large-scale mobilisations around particular events such as Equal Pay Day.

These are true BOLD actions!

Focus on electing women HSRs

Alongside the above campaign VTHC have been working towards getting more women elected as HSRs in their workplaces. With over 70% of IEU members being women, we are working hard to ensure this is reflected in our elected HSRs too. Women are often disproportionately impacted by safety issues such as gendered violence, bullying and harassment.

IEU VICTAS

(CONT.)

Campaign for inclusion of clauses in enterprise agreements

2021 has been a big year for bargaining in independent schools as well as commencement of bargaining for new Catholic agreements in both Victoria and Tasmania. We have worked hard to run a gender lens over claim development and have been successful in some schools in getting improved paid parental leave entitlements, paid family violence leave, limits on part time spread of

IEU QNT

CARYL ROSSER, ORGANISER

2021 has been a huge year for QNT BOLD women!

Be BOLD for Change online women's

conference: For many years our union has been planning to have an in-person women's conference, but unfortunately due to COVID, this was unable to happen. Instead, our union decided to hold our first online women's conference, Be BOLD for Change, on 19 August 2021. The event was held during term time and was well attended with a turn out of more than 50 members. Workshops focused on menopause as a workplace issue, mental health in the workplace, coercive control, and gender-based violence. The conference was member-centred with many IEU-QNT members being able to tell their stories throughout the day. The feedback from "Be BOLD for Change" has been very positive and members have since asked how they can become more involved with our union.

Gendered Violence: Our gender-based violence training has continued to be delivered online, with increasing numbers of members engaging with the training, included sessions being delivered in Catholic schools.

hours and days, inclusion of gendered violence in workplace policies on harassment and discrimination, and payment of superannuation on unpaid parental leave.

Audit of BOLD participants

VICTAS members continue to participate in the BOLD program through online webinars. We have been looking ways to engage and encourage a new group of women into this program in 2022.

It was also exciting to be part of the IEU SA BOLD professional development day where we were able to deliver gendered violence training to IEU SA women members.

Reproductive Health Leave: Our union has developed a model reproductive health leave clause, which seeks to provide paid leave and flexible work options for employees experiencing any concerns related to their reproductive health. The clause will be incorporated into upcoming collective bargaining rounds. We presented a session about reproductive health and our model clause at the Queensland Council of Unions Women's Conference in September, which was positively received by attendees. We acknowledge the work of the Health and Community Services Union in developing a leading campaign in this space.

On Menopause Day, 18 October, we lead the BOLD webinar, *Menopause and Reproductive Health What needs to change*.

BOLD QNT women are looking forward to 2022 where we can make further BOLD plans to enhance women's leadership, development and equity at work.

WORLD MENOPAUSE DAY

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND MENOPAUSE AT WORK: WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

World Menopause Day, held on 18 October 2021, is an important opportunity to raise awareness of menopause and reproductive health, including as a workplace issue.

An IEUA BOLD webinar, presented by Thea O'Connor, a senior advisor on workplace wellbeing, was held to consider reproductive health challenges in women's working lives, explore the types of workplace support needed, and seek to destigmatise the issue of women's health at work. As well as menopause, some of the issues discussed included IVF, pregnancy and other reproductive health issues affecting women, men and families.

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. This workshop aimed to help women 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.

Research had found that many Australians face concerns related to reproductive health.



- Almost 60% of Australian women aged 18-24 would like to have a child.
- 23.4% of women trying to get pregnant report struggling with infertility.
- More than 1 in 3 has experienced a miscarriage and nearly 60% of these women did not receive enough information or support.
- The loss of productivity and quality of life associated with endometriosis costs an estimated \$7.4 billion per year (2017-2018).
- The average age of menopause in Australia is 51 and most women experience menopause-related symptoms which occur for 5-10 years.

Barriers to support

Research has also found barriers to accessing health care and rates of discrimination are significant with:

- Nearly 12% of women have issues affording the health care they need, rising to nearly 40% among women with a disability.
- 31.7% of women aged 25-44 do not have enough time to attend health check appointments.

- 24.1% of women cannot get a health care appointment when they need one.
- Access is even more of an issue for regionally and remotely located people.
- 1 in 6 women experience discrimination in accessing health care.
- Women with a disability and LGBTIQ+ women are more than twice as likely to experience discrimination in accessing health care.

Menopause often means suffering in silence

Workplace wellbeing expert Thea O'Connor has been a leading voice in destigmatising and changing the conversation around menopause at work.

Thea said:

- despite the solid business argument, social responsibility, impact on productivity and demographics in workplaces, many people experiencing menopause did so without adequate support .ie. not seeking help is the costliest behaviour.
- approximately 78% of women aged 45-60 are in the workforce – at the time when they're most likely to experience menopause.
- a fear of discrimination, gendered ageism and being seen as “not up to the job” was preventing women from accessing the support they need to manage menopause symptoms at work.
- the number one thing that women ask for is acknowledgement that menopause exists.
- workplace policies could also be adjusted to consider menopause-specific support.

Why reproductive health is a workplace issue

IEU-QNT is currently developing a campaign to secure paid reproductive health leave. With so

many women participating in the workforce and making up the majority of the education workforce, there is arguably a social responsibility to address reproductive health concerns. Reproductive health concerns can pose a barrier to workforce participation, which is intrinsically linked with economic security.

With a gender pay gap of 14.2% nationally and a stubborn super gap, women cannot afford additional barriers to their economic security.

There are two key interventions that would better support all employees at work when it comes to reproductive health: providing paid leave and reducing the stigma attached to discussion reproductive health conditions at work.

Our union has created a model reproductive health leave clause that seeks 10 days of additional paid, non-cumulative leave per year. This leave is about providing concrete recognition of how pervasive these health conditions are and making a commitment to support employees' wellbeing and workforce participation. The model clause also includes consideration of flexible working arrangements to manage these health conditions.

Breaking the stigma takes time and is often the result of courageous people speaking up as BOLD IEU members did when sharing their stories and engaged in the conversation about reproductive health at work during this webinar. We will continue these conversations about reproductive health and fight to achieve real change for workers impacted by these conditions.

*Elements of this article have been taken from **Reproductive health is a workplace issue** by IEU-QNT Communications Officer Elise Cuthbertson which first appeared in the November issue of Independent Voice*

TOP TIPS FOR BEING BOLD & TAKING ACTION

ALEX PATTEN IEU-QNT PRESENTATION TO BOLD ONLINE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 19-8-21

- Know your core values and authentically live them in all that you do - write down the things that are most important to you and take action.
- Say YES to every opportunity that comes your way to learn, grow and build your platform. Put your hand up to get involved when it's about important stuff that lights you up. Join committees and take on roles that align with your passion and purpose.
- Say NO to things that drain you, don't align with your values, light you up or serve your higher purpose.
- Embrace being an activist, a feminist and lead by example – walk the talk! Speak up and know that you have something to say and be courageous to share your ideas with others at a wider level.
- Look for professional development opportunities to learn and grow your skills and be open to learning from others. Read the books and listen to the podcasts recommended to you by people who inspire you, as you'll find yourself in their stories too.
- Empower others to step into their power. Lift a sister up - imagine what we can achieve if we all commit to this!
- Allow yourself to be vulnerable and do the self-work - challenge your inner-talk, especially the mean girl lurking in us, who says we're not enough.



- Know your worth and back yourself – if you don't believe in you, why should anyone else?
- Never stop growing and learning from those around you – build your girl gang, seek connection, hang out with women who you love and admire and take up the opportunities to engage your role models.
- Speak your truth – even when your voice shakes, especially then and fight for what you know is right – don't let yourself be marginalised, silenced, or diminished!
- Know that together we can do hard things! When we walk beside one another and lift one another other up, we CAN make a difference. So, here's to living our life BOLDLY, sisters!