

Australian Education Union



Information Kit

for

Members of the

*Federal General Division
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Education Committee
(ATSIEC)*

and the

*Federal TAFE
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Education Committee
(TAFE ATSIEC)*

Contents:

<i>About the AEU</i>	1
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representation in the AEU</i>	1
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committees</i>	2
<i>Committee Meetings</i>	2
<i>Role of the Committees</i>	2
<i>Roles and Responsibilities of Committee Members</i>	2
<i>Elections</i>	3
<i>Electoral College</i>	3
<i>Observers to committee meetings</i>	3
<i>AEU Annual Federal Conference</i>	3
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Delegates</i>	3
<i>Roles and Responsibilities of Federal Conference Delegates</i>	4
<i>AEU Federal Executive</i>	4
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Federal Executive Member</i>	5
<i>TAFE Annual General Meeting and TAFE Executive</i>	5
<i>Working with other committees</i>	5
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Activities</i>	5
<i>Annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Seminar</i>	5
<i>AEU's Annual Reconciliation Award</i>	6
<i>Training Programs</i>	6
<i>Policies, Reports, Campaigns and Strategies</i>	6
<i>Travel and Allowances</i>	6
<i>Frequently Asked Questions</i>	7
<i>Contact Numbers</i>	9

Welcome...

The members of the AEU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee and TAFE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee would like to welcome you to the committee as a new member or observer.

We welcome you in the spirit of friendship and solidarity.

We acknowledge that wherever we meet the ancestors and elders of our own country are with us.

We ask the ancestors and elders of the country where we meet for their consent to meet there.

We respect and abide by the protocols of the local area upon which we meet.

We believe that talking and making decisions about the education of our peoples is an immense responsibility.

We believe that everyone has the right to contribute to discussions and decision-making processes. We will create a safe and supportive atmosphere for this to occur. We seek to find consensus when we are making decisions.

We believe that we have the responsibility to seek the views of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership of the AEU and represent those views at our meetings.

We believe that we have a responsibility to communicate the work of our committees to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership and the broader membership of the AEU's Branches and Associated Bodies.

About the AEU

The Australian Education Union has a membership of 155,000 educators who work in public schools, colleges, early childhood and vocational settings in all states and territories of Australia. Members include teachers and allied educational staff, principals and administrators mainly in Early Childhood Education Centres, government schools and TAFE systems.

The AEU is a nationally organised union with a Federal Office in Melbourne and Branch or Associated Body offices in all state and territory capitals as well as in many regional centres. The union is a registered organisation under the provisions of the Workplace Relations Act 1996.

The union is governed by a Federal Conference which meets at least annually. The AEU Federal Executive with representatives from all states and territories governs the Union between Federal Conferences. The Executive meets frequently and makes decisions about current issues and strategies affecting members on a national basis.

Federal and Professional Officers of the AEU are responsible for carrying out decisions of the Federal Conference and Executive. The Federal Office has particular responsibility for campaigns and relations with the Federal Government as well as International Relations for the AEU. The AEU is an Australian affiliate of the Education International, the world's largest non-government organisation. The AEU is also an affiliate of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representation in the AEU

There are a number of ways that the AEU includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in its decision-making structures.

1. Through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committees;
2. Through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Federal Conference Delegates;
3. Through a designated position on the Federal Executive;
4. Through an observer position on the TAFE Executive;
5. Through membership and work with other AEU Committees.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committees

The AEU has two committees which provide advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. One committee, known as the General Division committee provides advice on issues impacting on schools and early childhood education and the other, the TAFE Division committee, provides advice on TAFE issues. These committees are called by their acronyms – the ATSIEC and the TAFE ATSIEC.

All committee members are Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander educators working in various roles in government early childhood education centres, schools and TAFE colleges across Australia. As such, the business of the committee is conducted in a manner that is culturally appropriate. Although some serious issues are discussed and serious decisions are made, the committee meets in the spirit of good humour, friendship and cultural responsibility.

Committee Meetings

There are generally two face to face meetings per year. One is along-side of the AEU's Annual Federal Conference, and another is held to correspond to an event or training program. The committees also meet by teleconference on an as needs basis.

Role of the Committees

The committees have a number of roles:

- To advise the AEU on issues pertinent to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and broader issues;
- To advise the AEU Federal Office on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues from your Branch or Associated Body;
- To provide information to Branches and Associated Bodies about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues at a national level;
- To promote Social Justice and the process of Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members;
- To elect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Federal Executive representative (see next section for more information).

Roles and Responsibilities of Committee Members

As a representative of your Branch or Associated Body your roles and responsibilities are as follows:

- Consult with your constituents and raise issues on their behalf – this may involve holding a meeting to discuss issues;
- Read papers prior to attending meetings;
- Be informed about the issues to be discussed so you can contribute to the debate;
- Be aware that some matters discussed are confidential;
- Provide a report (written) on issues relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education at meetings;
- Report back on the outcomes of the meeting to your Branch/Associated Body;

- Contribute to the process of decision-making about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in your Branch or Associated Body;
- Contribute to the process of decision-making about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education at the national level; and
- Understand basic meeting procedure.

Elections

Representatives on the Committee are elected for a two year term. Elections are conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission. It is important that where possible, committee members are elected, as then they can vote for the AEU’s Indigenous member on the Federal Executive.

Electoral College

The elected members of the committees form an electorate, or Electoral College. This College is responsible for electing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative to the Federal Executive. These elections are also conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and occur every two years.

Observers to committee meetings

Observers are encouraged to contribute to all discussions and decision-making processes at the committee level. It is rare that a decision requires being put to the vote, but if they are, observers do not carry a formal vote at meetings.



AEU Annual Federal Conference

Federal Conference is the supreme governing authority of the Australian Education Union. Delegates to Federal Conference include the Federal President, Deputy Federal President and delegates representing the General Division, TAFE Division and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members in each state and territory of Australia. Delegates hold office for two years, after which time they may be re-elected.

The AEU’s Annual Federal Conference held in the Christmas school holidays is an opportunity for Australia’s public educators as unionists to make plans for the coming year. Federal Conference meets each year (for the past 3 years in different Australian capital cities) to discuss the priorities and policies of the union. It also determines changes to the AEU Federal Rules and appoints professional officers to work in the AEU Federal Office.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Delegates

Each Branch and Associated Body of the AEU has a designated position for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member to attend the Federal Conference. These positions are

elected by the general membership of each Branch and Associated Body. They are voting positions at the Federal Conference.

Roles and Responsibilities of Federal Conference Delegates

As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Federal Conference delegate, your roles and responsibilities are as follows:

- To attend the Federal Conference (please note, there is a specific table set up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates at Federal Conference, some members choose to sit at this table, whilst others choose to sit with their Branches and Associated Bodies).
- Special meetings of Conference can be convened during the year. Most often these meetings occur by delegates casting a vote through the post.
- To attend relevant caucuses. Throughout conference there are a range of meetings occurring, such as the women's caucus, Branch and Associated Body caucuses, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caucus, to name just a few. Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates and observers to Conference are encouraged to attend the relevant caucuses and put forward issues relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- To vote on resolutions. If you are an elected delegate you have a vote at Conference.
- To engage in the debate. As new members to Conference, you may feel apprehensive about speaking from the floor. We encourage you to engage in debate over the resolutions, and offer support for you to do so. At past conferences, we have had 'practice runs' for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates to assist them in moving and seconding resolutions. If you would like to speak and require advice on how to do this, then please ask the Federal Aboriginal Education Officer, or another member of the ATSIEC or TAFE ATSIEC.
- To have fun! There are a range of events, such as the Annual Federal Conference dinner, where AEU life membership is bestowed on activists who have contributed to the Union in a special way. Dinners and events are a fun way to get to know other delegates. We encourage you to attend.



AEU Federal Executive

The management of the Union is, between meetings of Federal Conference, vested in the Federal Executive which is the Committee of Management of the Union. Federal Executive meets at least four times a year in order to implement and monitor the implementation of Federal Conference decisions. The Federal Executive consists of:

- The Federal President;
- The Deputy Federal President;
- The Federal TAFE President;
- One Executive member per 15 000 branch members (General Division);
- One Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member representative;

- One Principal’s representative¹;
- One Early Childhood Education representative².

Between meetings of Federal Conference, the Federal Executive has all powers of Federal Conference except a number of powers defined in the rules as exclusive to Federal Conference, for example, elections of Federal Professional Officers.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Federal Executive Member

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member on Executive is an elected position and as such the position has the right to a vote. The role of the Executive member is to represent the views and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to Executive, and engage in broader debate. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Executive member is voted for by the elected members of the ATSIEC and TAFE ATSIEC. This election is conducted by the AEC and occurs every two years.

TAFE Annual General Meeting and TAFE Executive

There is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander observer position on the TAFE Executive. TAFE ATSIEC members also attend components of the TAFE AGM.



Working with other committees

There is a range of ways that the ATSIEC and TAFE ATSIEC contribute to the work of the Union. For example, there is currently an Indigenous member on the Principal’s Committee. The Early Childhood Education Committee and the ATSIECs have worked together on joint projects.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Activities

The AEU runs a number of activities to seek the input of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and the broader community and to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on education and other issues.

Annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Seminar

As a part of the Annual Federal Conference program, the AEU conducts an Annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Seminar. The seminar focuses on issues that are relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. For example, the theme of

¹ This position is currently filled in observer status only. Branches and Associated Body rule changes are required in order to enact the voting capacity of this member of Executive.

² As above

the 2004 Seminar was ‘Quality Educators Produce Quality Outcomes.’ Approximately 100 people attend the seminar each year. It is the only forum that the Union conducts where non-members contribute to the development of Union policy. This is in acknowledgement of the requirement for broader community consultation in the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education policy.

AEU’s Annual Reconciliation Award

The Award is open to members who contribute to the process of Reconciliation through education. The winner of the award receives \$500.

Training Programs

The AEU conducts training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. In 2004, approximately 30 members met in Canberra to learn lobbying skills. They then put these skills in to place when they met with a range of Federal Politicians, including their local members and the Federal Minister for Education.



Policies, Reports, Campaigns and Strategies

The AEU has a range of policies, campaigns and strategies that can be accessed online. See www.aeufederal.org.au and follow the Indigenous Education link to access the latest policies, campaigns, strategies and information.



Travel and Allowances

As the ATSIEC and TAFE ATSIEC are national committees, there is often a requirement for members to travel away from home to attend meetings. The AEU Federal Office pays for travel and allowances from capital city to capital city. Branches and Associated Bodies cover costs and allowances to get you from your home to the capital city in your state/territory. Allowances are paid at a set rate depending on the city in which the meeting is being held. The Federal Office will issue you with two cab charges to enable you to travel from the airport to the meeting destination and return. You will need to contact your Branch or Associated Body for additional cab charges.

All observers to committee meetings are funded by Branches and Associated Bodies.



Frequently Asked Questions

I am attending the meeting for the first time and I don't know anyone. How do I make contact with other people?

You can contact the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Contact Officer in your Branch or Associated Body. They will be able to put you in touch with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. You can also contact the Federal Aboriginal Education Officer. Contact numbers can be found in the next section of this kit.

I attended the ATSIEC meeting and the Seminar, where I was among my own people and felt comfortable. When I went in to the Federal Conference, I was a bit scared because there were so many strangers. What should I do?

Most people who attend their first Federal Conference are nervous. There are many new things to learn and new people to meet. There is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates table set up at Conference for this reason. Members can choose to sit at this table or with their Branches and Associated Bodies. Members are encouraged to mix with other Conference delegates regardless of where they sit.

I want to talk in a debate but I don't know how the meeting is run, and I am scared that I will speak out of order, or say something to shame myself. Who can I talk to?

Federal Conference, Federal Executive and most other meetings of the AEU follow a set of Standing Orders. Meetings are generally chaired by the Federal President or the Deputy Federal President. There is a set order of business. There is a set order of debate, including timed speaking slots for speakers for and against.

The Standing Orders governing the meeting are included in the Federal Conference papers. If you feel unsure about when to speak and what to say, then ask either someone from your Branch or Associated Body, or the Federal Aboriginal Education Officer. A time for you to have a practice run can be organised.

Someone asked me if I wanted to be a proxy for them. What does this mean?

If a delegate is going to be absent from a meeting, they can appoint a proxy in writing. The proxy then carries the voting rights of the absent member.

Where do I stay when I go away to meetings and who do I stay with?

If you are a Federal ATSIEC delegate the Federal Office of the AEU will organise your travel and accommodation. Delegates are sent a registration form for all events, which will generally set out a choice of accommodation arrangements. Many members choose to share rooms to cut down on costs. During the week of Federal Conference, members sometimes prefer to group together and stay in a serviced apartment instead of a motel. If you don't know anyone at the meeting, we can arrange for you to 'buddy-up' with a person for company.

Someone has asked me to nominate for a position with the AEU. I don't know anything about the Union although I've always been a member. Where do I look for more information?

You can find different bits of information from different parts of the Union. At a school or college level, you can ask your workplace representative. They will have information about your Branch and Associated Body – campaigns, meeting dates and access to policies.

At a State/Territory level, there is an Indigenous Education Officer or contact person for Indigenous education in every Branch and Associated Body. At the Federal level, contact the Federal Aboriginal Education Officer is the first point of contact.



Contact Numbers:

Australian Education Union Federal Office

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Fax: (03) 9693 1805
Email: aeu@aeufederal.org.au
Web: <http://www.aeufederal.org.au>

AEU ACT Branch

PO Box 3042
Manuka ACT 2603
Telephone: (02) 6272 7900
Fax: (02) 6273 1828
Email: priority1@aeuact.asn.au
Web: <http://www.aeuact.asn.au>

New South Wales' Teachers Federation

Locked Bag 3010
Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: (02) 9217 2100
Fax: (02) 9217 2470
Email: mail@nswtf.org.au
Web: <http://www.nswtf.org.au>

AEU Northern Territory Branch

PO Box 4494
Darwin NT 0801
Telephone: (08) 8981 3641
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Email: admin@aeunt.org.au
Web: <http://www.aeunt.org.au>

Queensland Teachers' Union

PO Box 1750
Milton BC QLD 4064
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Fax: (07) 3369 0022
Email: qtu@qtu.asn.au
Web: <http://www.qtu.asn.au>

AEU South Australian Branch

163 Greenhill Road
Parkside SA 5063
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AEU Tasmanian Branch
PO Box 117
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