



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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Women Educators Call for Government Commitment to Working Women

The Federal Women's Conference of Australian Education Union, being held in Melbourne this Saturday and Sunday, is discussing the future employment opportunities for women and girls in this country and the very real challenges facing women in education.

Australia has

- one of the most gender segregated workforces in the industrialised world
- 72% of all part time work being done by women
- a significant increase in the numbers of (predominantly women) workers employed in a casual/precarious employment
- one of the lowest workforce participation rates of women within OECD countries
- no national scheme for paid maternity leave

AEU federal president, Ms Pat Byrne said, "The federal government has simply paid lip service to issues surrounding women's employment. Australian women need a federal government genuinely committed to the principle of women's full participation in the workforce by providing real options for work and family flexibilities which meet the needs of women.

A universal paid maternity leave scheme and access to affordable childcare are critical elements of such flexibility."

Ms Byrne said, "Within education, a backlash against the progress made by women and girls over the last three decades is being seen in the debates around issues such as the education of boys and the feminisation of the teaching profession. These debates have been fuelled by Federal Education Minister Nelson's shallow and misguided responses to issues concerning educational outcomes which have created a false dichotomy between the successes of girls and those of boys."

"Women educators from schools, TAFE and Early Childhood sectors across Australia will keep this in mind when they vote.

"The AEU will launch a Women's Activism Kit at the conference, to provide union members with factual information about the realities facing women within education and the broader workforce as well as ongoing strategies to challenge the continuing inequality which has in fact worsened under the Howard government," said Ms Byrne.

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