



EQUITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

The Independent Education of Australia has a strong commitment to equity and inclusiveness for staff and students in the non government education sector. Equal opportunity is a fundamental human right which is based upon the principle that all persons are born equal in dignity and rights.

Through its policies and practices, the IEUA is committed to fair, safe and non-discriminatory workplaces for staff in its own organisation and in non government education settings and to positive and inclusive learning environments for students.

The IEUA has argued the need for strong legislative frameworks at national and State/Territory levels to ensure access to anti-discrimination legal remedies in areas such as sex/gender, race, disability, age, and carer/family responsibilities.

This is based on the union's view that such legislative frameworks give authority to a range of United Nations human rights conventions in relation to workplace rights and the provision of equal educational opportunities for students. The Hobart and Adelaide Declarations of National Goals for Schooling also reflect these human rights aspirations of the UN Conventions.

Priorities and Future Directions

As part of setting future priorities and directions, the IEUA supports:

- initiatives to strengthen human rights and civil liberties through a Bill of Rights as part of the Australian Constitution
- strong legislative frameworks grounded in International Conventions which are fundamental for the development of a tolerant, fair and democratic society. Non government schools should be models of good practice in complying with Commonwealth and State/Territory anti-discrimination laws relating to staff and students
- the need for critical attention and resources to be given to Indigenous education issues in order to improve

Indigenous student outcomes. There must also be a commitment from governments and employers to lift and enhance the participation of Indigenous staff in all education settings including non government schools.

- the development of a nationally consistent set of definitions in relation to special needs and disability for the purposes of funding and to ensure equitable access and participation for all students regardless of the school they attend. In order to strengthen the capacity of schools to meet the educational needs of all students, the IEUA urges the development of a framework of resource standards to support high quality teaching and learning for students with disabilities.
- a funding policy which embodies principles of equity, social justice and the common good as argued in the IEUA's submission to the 2004 *Senate Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding for Schools*
- the introduction of a national system of paid maternity leave, consistent with the 14 weeks provision in ILO Convention 183. There is also a need to ensure greater access by staff with family and carer responsibilities to secure part-time employment at various career stages.

The IEUA believes that the principles of social justice and a genuine commitment to the dignity of all persons should characterise non government education. School systems, schools, teachers and support staff therefore have a vital leadership role and obligation to practice and promote the values of equity and inclusiveness.

The Union will continue to emphasise the need in its own policies and in its representations to government, to employers and the community for the human rights of staff and students to be high on the national agenda.