

Why should I become a sub-branch representative?



Every union is only as strong as the sum of its parts. That means high membership levels and a well-run union office, and most importantly a representative in every workplace. Having a sub-branch rep in your workplace is the best way to ensure members stay connected with their union. Branch Officers also need a point of contact to know what is happening in each school so they can best represent all members. Sub-branch reps are a critically important link between the union office and the workplace.

What is the role of a sub-branch rep?

- ◆ Encourage all eligible staff to join the AEU NT.
- ◆ Offer support and advice where possible to AEU members at your workplace.
- ◆ Hold regular meetings (1 per term) and keep minutes. Forward these to the AEU office.
- ◆ Liaise with the AEU office to help keep your membership list accurate.
- ◆ Relay important information to the office about issues that come up in your workplace.
- ◆ Distribute AEU information to staff members when requested either via email, noticeboard or in staff pigeonholes.

- ◆ Represent members in meetings with managements where possible. In some cases it may be more appropriate to obtain representation from a full-time officer from the union office.
- ◆ Work with AEU full-time officers and organisers to campaign on key union issues such as enterprise bargaining and school funding.
- ◆ Assist in addressing occupational health and safety matters to create a safer workplace.
- ◆ Establish a working relationship between yourself and management and convey staff concerns. A good practice is to set up regular meeting times with your Principal or Line Manager.
- ◆ Where possible, attend AEU Regional Council meetings and Branch Conference as a delegate.
- ◆ Encourage members to vote in union elections and take part in industrial ballots.

Can I access training and resources?

The AEU NT offers training courses for sub-branch representatives. These courses have been designed for those just beginning as reps as well as those looking for more advanced skills. We also publish a wide variety of resources for reps, like FAQ advice sheets and guidelines that are available on our website. Our full-time officers are available to take your call to advise on handling challenging situations.

What are my rights as a sub-branch rep?

Some members are concerned that being a union rep might damage their standing or career. However, legal



protections uphold the rights of union delegates, including in the *Fair Work Act and the NT Anti-Discrimination Act*. It is against the law for an employer to take any adverse action if you are raising legitimate concerns about issues affecting members in your workplace. Within the NT public sector additional protections exist, such as those detailed in the “Commissioner’s Guideline on Working with Unions”, published by OCPE.

Holding effective sub-branch meetings

Sub-branch meetings provide members with a democratic forum in which to raise concerns at the workplace level. We understand that workplaces are busy and that there are often many meetings to attend. Whilst you should aim to meet at least once per term, it is best to have a reason to have the meeting and try to circulate an agenda an advance. It is also advisable to arrange a time to meet when the maximum number of members can attend. Quorum to make decisions is a majority of members if your workplace has less than 10 members, or if your workplace has 10 or more members, then at least 30% need be present.

How can I help disseminate information?

You should ensure that a union notice board exists in a prominent place in your staffroom. The AEU NT office will send information such as Member Bulletins and the Territory Educator to your school and as the sub-branch rep we ask that this be displayed/circulated.

Workplace consultative processes

Consultation at the workplace level is required over many matters affecting employees. Union reps play an important role in this process and should be proactive. In larger workplaces union reps can request that a formal consultative committee is established.

How do I address problems in the workplace?

If a problem arises, begin by gathering as much information in writing about the problem including what avenues have been exhausted already. If you are unable to resolve the matter in your workplace consultative meetings, refer the matter to the AEU office.



How many reps are there in a workplace?

The roles and numbers of reps are set in our union branch rules. Each year your sub-branch must hold elections (usually in Term 1) and provide an opportunity for members to nominate as a rep. If your sub-branch has fewer than 10 members, one Sub-Branch President should be elected. If you have 10 or more members, then a Secretary and Vice-President should also be elected.

Any questions?

You don’t have to handle things on your own! If you are unsure at any time on roles and processes, you can contact the office to request assistance.

References and further information

[AEU NT website](#)

[Commissioner's Guideline on Working With Unions](#)

[Teachers and Assistant Teachers Enterprise Agreement](#)

[Teacher Responsibilities Guide](#)