





9 Common Myths

For too long now, teachers have had no genuine choice when it comes to representation. They've been bullied and coerced into joining a union that has become obsessed with politics, and less concerned about them. Very high fees, very poor support.

But now, the TPAA is on the scene – and the AEU is not happy about it!

Here are some myths and smears about us that you may have come across:

-  “Is not a registered trade union so it can't claim to be a union”
-  “Has no legal team to back you up”
-  “Requires you to pay your own legal costs”
-  “Has fees which are not tax deductible”
-  “Is a private business/company and isn't subject to governance requirements”
-  “Can't support you in the workplace”
-  “Has no presence in Canberra and can't bargain your EA”
-  “Is linked to right-wing politicians”
-  “Can't represent you in the commission”

FALSE



- 1.** We are not and never claim to be a “registered organisation” under the current industrial laws. We are a professional association that goes far beyond the traditional union offerings for our members and fits the definition of an “industrial association” under the Fair Work Act. In terms of delivering for members, the member experience, member services, and fighting for members, the TPAA is the most impressive and innovative union in Australia.

Australia is a signatory to the ILO conventions on international worker rights, under which we meet the criteria for being defined as an organisation. These international conventions protect workers’ rights and hold significant standing in the labour movement.

The freedom to associate is further protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other conventions as adopted in Australian laws. Unfortunately, some states and territories have legislated union monopolies by denying new associations the ability to register as so-called “registered organisations” – something unique to Australia in comparison to the UK, NZ and USA.

We’re run by teachers, for teachers. “Registered organisations” are often run by career bureaucrats “approved” by the public employers. Despite having fewer members (for now) we take on and fight five times as many cases as the registered trade unions.

- 2.** **We have legal teams, Red Law and Red Union Solicitors,** and often bring on external lawyers and barristers to cover cases that have escalated.

These lawyers are experts in industrial relations, underpayments, contractual disputes and discrimination in employment. Other unions often ignore their members completely.

- 3.** If someone is a member before their workplace issue arises, they are 100% covered. **There are zero additional costs to the member.** In fact, often the result is a pay-out for the member. You can see some statistics on how much money we have won back for members here: www.redunion.com.au/case-stats-2022

- 4.** All of our fees are **fully tax deductible** and our members have had no trouble in this regard since our inception.

- 5.** The TPAA is an incorporated society/association regulated by Consumer Affairs Victoria and is proudly served by the Red Unions. The TPAN (NSW and the ACT) is a company limited by guarantee, structured much like thousands of non-profit charities and regulated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).

Incorporated societies have governance requirements like tens of thousands of other incorporated associations within Australia such as other professional associations, sporting clubs and churches. The Red Union Group is a company of advocates, teachers, nurses, and support staff that serves the TPAA and its members promptly and respectfully.

- 6.** Whilst we cannot force our way into workplaces, **we can, and often do, come on to site to represent our members.** **We have a different philosophy to other unions. We want our members to work in positive, good workplaces.** Kicking down the door is not a good way to start negotiations or resolve a problem with your employer.

If the employer, the Directorate, is not respecting a member’s rights, we don’t need to see them in their office. We’re happy to see them at the tribunal or court. This strategy is reliable, as we have a reputation that if an employee’s industrial interests are affected, the employer knows it should be on its best behaviour.

- 7.** We are in the process of building a membership base to open a physical office. At present we have the Vice President of TPAN, Glenn Fowler, working on bargaining your next enterprise agreement and representing our growing member base in the ACT.

- 8.** The TPAA believes in freedom of political expression and activity with no formal affiliations. Other unions take huge advantage of members to provide funding and candidates to the ALP (that’s why their fees are so high). It’s all politics for them; that’s the way they think. An apolitical union that actually exists for members just doesn’t make sense to them, given their disdain for people with alternative political view-points.

The TPAA and other Red Unions are the only unions in Australia not captured and corrupted by politics. In fact, we were designed to never be political and never support political parties, financially or otherwise. **It’s in our constitution that we are prohibited from providing financial or in-kind support to any political party.**

- 9.** **We continue to represent members in various commissions.** Most recently, we brought over 500 applications to the Human Rights Commission and many hundreds more to the Fair Work Commission. In circumstances where representation for covered workplace issues is not available to the TPAA directly, we can instruct the retained registered industrial agents or solicitors to act.

What’s really happening here is that certain governments have removed competition and political diversity from industrial relations to make it easy for the organisations that support them, either directly through financial donations or in other ways, like campaigning for them at elections.

If the Government doesn’t stop workers being able to choose their own union, the money disappears. That’s what this is about. But one thing is clear – no TPAA member will ever be left behind.

Remember that the TPAA is PROVEN to fight for members, no matter the issue.