Ged Kearney became President of the ACTU in 2010, being the third woman to hold the post. From 1997 to 2010 she served as President and then Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation, overseeing a substantial growth in membership; today the ANF represents over 200,000 nurses and midwives.

She became a nurse in 1985, working in both the private and public sectors. She gained a degree in education and branched into Nursing Education, becoming the manager of Clinical Nursing Education Department at Austin Health.

Ged participated in the Victorian Nurses’ strike in 1986 which resulted in substantial improvements to pay and conditions.

Herself one of nine children, Ged is also a mother of 4 and continues to live in Melbourne.

Leaders of organisations have to balance many conflicting duties and interests. Trying to get the balance right is one way of understanding the nature of the ethical challenge. Better leaders see this challenge as much more than a minimal exercise in managing risk. The greater challenge is to place the organisation’s goals within a broader context of actively contributing to the quality of life on the planet. It includes the organisation’s stakeholders with their varying interests but it also needs to respond to the wider questions in which individuals and organisations are contributors.

The Edmund Rice Business Ethics Initiative invites you to breakfast with Ged Kearney. She has actively assumed as President of the ACTU a responsibility to go beyond the experience of people at work to be an advocate for change to improve all aspects of Australians’ lives. She sees it as her responsibility to build respect for fairness among those, particularly politicians, union members and the wider public, a task that must be compatible with all other roles of unions.

While some might view this as going beyond a brief to represent the interests of the organisation and its members, it recognises that ethics always has dimensions that go beyond the carefully and cleverly drawn boxes of the simply managerial approach. There must be room for the most human of aspirations in human organisations.

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