



NSW/ACT Independent Education Union

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2 DECEMBER STOP WORK ACTION

Dear Rep and Members

Teachers in Catholic Schools Making a Difference

Some Catholic employers have circulated letters to teachers in schools arguing that there was no reason for teachers to take strike action. The employers said they would match any increase paid by the NSW Government to public school teachers.

Other CEO Directors have taken a more balanced approach recognising the industrial rights of their teachers.

Teachers in Catholic schools are expected to encourage their students to understand and celebrate their uniqueness and their capacity both as individuals and collectively to 'make a difference' in the world. Unfortunately, some Catholic employers have no such expectations of teachers.

When it comes to the 'world of work', teachers are asked to be silent, passive bystanders. "Do nothing about your salaries and conditions," they are told. "We will pay you the same as public school teachers, so you don't need to go on strike."

So it's the public school teachers' role to try and increase a paltry salary offer. Their role to defend teachers' working conditions such as sick leave and hours of work. Their sole duty to strike, lose pay and be criticised for standing up for the profession by the talk-back shock jocks and in newspaper editorials.

Teachers' salaries and conditions do not fall from the sky. They are not gifts from employers. Our sick leave, long service leave, paid maternity leave, hours of work, and release time were all gained through our actions and the industrial campaigns, including strikes undertaken by teachers in Catholic schools, over many years.

It's these conditions in our schools which are under threat from a Government-initiated policy of making teachers trade off conditions for a pay rise.

If we are offered the same pay as public school teachers, we will also be offered the same or similar conditions – 'trade-offs'!

Teachers in Catholic schools have an opportunity to try and 'make a difference'. By doing this we can also lead by example, encouraging students not to passively accept an employer-assigned role in 'the world of work' which they will one day confront.

Yours sincerely

DICK SHEARMAN
General Secretary