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Give us a break – don't cut our pay

News of the NSW Government's imposition of a "pay freeze" has been met with dismay by IEU members.

Benchmarking of salaries, in any profession, is heavily influenced by public sector outcomes. IEU members will be directly impacted by the decision to freeze salaries in the public sector for 12 months.

It is likely this freeze will be staggered. Agreements already signed off, should be delivered. The freeze will begin at the expiry of the current agreement.

In Catholic systemic schools, members are meeting and voting on action to help secure the overdue payments of 2.5 per cent in both 2020 and 2021. From the NSW Government's position, the freeze would take place in 2022 – effectively, it's a pay cut set for 2022. This is what our state school colleagues can expect as well: pay parity and its consequent links to our sector is alive and well.

It is unclear how the proposal will impact members in independent schools whose agreements expire in February 2021, but we anticipate an attempted freeze.

Pam Smith, Assistant Secretary of the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch said, "Teachers, support staff and principals have served their communities with distinction in 2020. To impose this freeze is an unreasonable response to a pandemic."

"The extraordinary bushfire season and the coronavirus pandemic have impacted on heavily on schools. The glue holding communities together was the combined efforts of essential workers – our teachers and support staff. They made service provision possible," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Mark Northam.

"Schools stayed open and pivoted to online learning, with staff supporting students and families in all kinds of ways. They deserve immense respect," said Northam.

The NSW Government's pay freeze is out of step with community expectations. It is also out of step with stimulus to enable spending. It is out of step with principles of sound economic management.

Well known economist Dr. Jim Stanford, Director of the Centre for Future Work said: "This could turn a recession into a depression... Pay freezes are being imposed at the very

moment when public sector workers such as healthcare workers, first responders, teachers and social service providers are performing vital tasks, at personal risk to themselves, to support Australians through the pandemic. Freezing pay for these essential workers is not just morally questionable – it’s also a major economic mistake”.

Northam said, “the Berejiklian Government must urgently reconsider its position and support essential workers, not thwart fair salary outcomes already constrained by its own legislation. The 2.5 per cent cap on pay increases is the current NSW Government’s approach to negotiating industrial outcomes.

“To have yet another unnecessary legislated imposition is to unfairly constrain industrial outcomes.”

**Mark Northam,
Secretary
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**Pam Smith,
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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 30,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.