

NewsExtra

March 2021

Aspect Schools

As members would be aware, the union has been bargaining for new multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) for teachers and support staff employed in over 200 NSW and ACT independent schools. Existing Independent Schools MEAs expired at the beginning of 2021 and the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) commenced bargaining for new MEAs in late 2019.

However, meetings with the AIS paused for most of 2020 and have only now resumed in early 2021.

The 2021 percentage pay rise

The AIS is still refusing to centrally negotiate pay rises for 2021 and has stated this position very clearly to both the union and schools. Instead, it is intended that the proposed MEAs in force from the beginning of 2022 will include a pay increase for 2022 and incorporate a pay increase for 2021. However, the 2021 increase will not be backdated in the MEAs, so schools who have not already paid the increase will not have to pay it for 2021.

In December 2020, Maryanne Gosling, National Director of Aspect Education, advised staff that there was a “high degree of uncertainty” about the outlook for 2021 because of a range of reasons. She advised that because of this uncertainty, Aspect would not pay a general pay rise to school staff, but rather two OOPs (one off payments or lump sum payments) each consisting of 0.875% of current salary. Superannuation was to be paid on the OOP. The first payment was made on 18 February 2021 and the second is due on 22 July 2021.

Aspect staff still waiting

The union has not been advised of any reduction in enrolments in 2020 nor 2021 and we see that in recent years Aspect schools have received significant increases in government funding (some schools have received increases per child of over 20% since 2017).

It is also the case that Aspect “is in a sound financial position with reserves” [comment by Aspect’s auditor in published Financial Statements in March 2020]. For example, just in 2019 Aspect generated a surplus of over \$9 million.

Given this, it is unclear why Aspect has not matched the 2021 pay rises in many other independent schools. Maryanne Gosling stated in December that “participating in the MEA ensures that staff at Aspect maintain salaries that are the highest in the sector for their style of MEA or Support Staff Agreement”. She also stated, “we will continue to monitor the external environment including the factors I listed so that we can **adjust our strategy** if necessary”.

The problem

The union has requested a meeting with Aspect management concerning the pay rises, to request an adjustment to the strategy, but this request has been refused.

It is now clear that over 100 independent schools have agreed to pay their staff increases of 2% – 2.5%, with the vast majority of these paying the full amount from February 2021. Government schools, Catholic systemic schools and most Catholic independent schools have paid increases to teachers of 2.28% from January or February this year. The Aspect proposal for OOPs of 1.75% in two instalments is therefore **well below that offered by many other independent schools** and particularly disadvantages any staff member who resigns employment between now and the introduction of the new MEA, whenever that is (as accumulated leave will be paid at 2020 rates).

The top Band 2 Proficient teacher rate in Aspect schools remains **\$1,000 below** that of government and Catholic schools.

Other conditions are also below those in other sectors. For example, the union is advised that in some Aspect schools, teachers do not get the standard 2 or 2.5 hours per week in release from face-to-face teaching (called Classroom Release Time). Support staff also get lower rates of long service leave and personal/carer's leave than support staff in other school sectors, notwithstanding the challenging nature of their work.

The union's full claim in the negotiations with the AIS is attached.

The next steps

Please attend a meeting at your school to vote on the motion no later than **Wednesday 31 March 2021**.

Invite your colleagues to join here: <http://www.ieu.asn.au/join-page>



CHAPTER MOTION

The _____ Chapter of the IEU calls on
Aspect to:

1. immediately improve the pay offer for 2021 for all staff
2. guarantee release from face-to-face teaching for teachers of a minimum of two hours per week
3. support improved long service leave and personal/carer's leave for support staff.

Date of the meeting: _____

Number For

Number Against

Any further comments: _____

Please **email the motion** to the IEU office

(Attn: Madi): ieu@ieu.asn.au

by **Thursday 1 April 2021.**

