

NewsExtra

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Independent Schools' Pay Offer Totally Unacceptable

Members would be aware that current Multi-Enterprise Agreements (MEAs) applying to independent schools in NSW and the ACT expired in January 2021. Although independent schools issued bargaining notices in late 2019, very little progress was made in the negotiation meetings between the union and the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) in 2020. There was a six month pause in the meetings in 2020 and there have only been three meetings in 2021, in February, March and June, as after the March 2021 meeting, the AIS advised they needed to consult further with member schools to respond to the IEU's claims.

Pay rises in 2021

The AIS advised the union in 2020 that pay rises in 2021, if any, would be determined on a school-by-school "discretionary" basis. Since then, schools have announced varying pay rises for 2021. Well over 200 schools have paid an increase with the majority paying 2% or more.

AIS offer on 8 June

The union met with the AIS most recently on 8 June. Following the cancellation of earlier meetings, the AIS had undertaken to provide a comprehensive response to the union's claims.

Unfortunately, from the union's perspective, this did not occur.

The AIS has proposed the following pay rises:

- 2.5% February 2022 **(this is inclusive of pay rises already paid in 2021)**
- 1.25% February 2023
- 1.25% February 2024

A classification change put as part of the offer is that Proficient Teachers employed under the Standards Model and Hybrid Model MEAs will progress immediately from Band 1 to Band 2 on attaining Proficiency and not be required to wait up to six months as occurs now. No other improvements to teacher classifications (such as shortening the Band 2 scale in the Hybrid Model MEA, increasing the Experienced Teacher rate in the Hybrid Model MEA or increasing the Band 2 rate in the Standards Model MEA) have been proposed.

The only improved working condition the AIS has proposed is emergency disaster leave which would be available if an employee was unable to attend work because of circumstances that have been declared to be a state of emergency. For teachers, the leave would be deducted from personal/carer's leave and for support staff it would be unpaid. There are very few occasions when a state of emergency has been called in NSW so the provision would be of very little value to

members, and a reduction on current practice. Prior to the 2019-2020 bushfire season, a state of emergency had only been called four times in NSW since 2006.

Some other minor changes were suggested by the AIS, but most of these were to meet legally required minimum conditions under the *Fair Work Act*, such as unpaid domestic violence leave.

AIS did not respond in writing to other elements of the union's claims but stated that all other claims were rejected.

AIS representatives added, that if the union wanted a higher pay rise for members, we would need to identify "flexibilities" in exchange for pay rises. These were largely unspecified with no indication of the additional pay rises that would be available.

IEU response

The IEU advised the AIS that the schools' offer was totally unacceptable.

For the majority of schools that have paid 2% or 2.5% in 2020, the pay offer represents an additional increase of **0% - 0.5% in 2022**, with low pay rises of 1.25% in subsequent years. Government and Catholic schools paid a 2.28% pay increase this year with further increases in 2022 and 2023 anticipated to be at least 1.5% per annum, but possibly much more. This is because public sector unions are strongly campaigning against the wage freeze imposed by the NSW government. Further, shortages of teachers in country areas and in Sydney will no doubt put pressure on the NSW government to find a creative way of attracting and retaining teachers in the profession.

The ACT government has been paying its teachers increases of 3% per annum.

Unless there is a substantial improvement in the offers, the union will have no choice but to advise members to vote NO on any MEAs put to the vote of employees.

The AIS is seeking further meetings with the union and may provide an improved pay offer. We will inform members of any developments.

Please encourage your colleagues who have not yet joined the union to do so – maximum support is essential for support in this campaign.

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

