

Tuesday 14 June 2022

Unions call historic meeting as education crisis intensifies

An urgent meeting of the Independent Education Union of Australia's NSW/ACT Branch Executive was convened today to determine an appropriate response to the NSW Government's salary cap. The NSW Teachers Federation also convened a meeting of its Executive today for the same reason.

On 6 June, the NSW Government offered a 3% pay increase to public sector workers, including teachers, in 2022-23. However, public sector unions and their members have rejected the revised policy as it fails to stop the dramatic decline in real wages.

"The policy does nothing to address unsustainable workloads or staffing shortages," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Mark Northam. "It still represents a real pay cut for school staff while keeping workloads at unsustainable levels."

As a result of the Executive meetings today, a historic joint meeting of the NSW Teachers Federation and the IEUA NSW/ACT will convene on 21 June to consider pay offers contained in the NSW budget and from Catholic employers and determine an appropriate course of action.

"This is an extraordinary moment," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Mark Northam. "We are standing shoulder-to-shoulder – fixing the education crisis in NSW demands no less."

"The profession is at breaking point. Staff shortages and sinking salaries mean teachers and support staff are really struggling. The COVID pandemic didn't cause this but it has certainly exacerbated it."

The IEU represents 33,000 teachers, principals and support staff in the non-government sector. Since January, the union has been negotiating with Catholic employers for new enterprise agreements for teachers and support staff in Catholic diocesan schools.

While the IEU is subject to federal industrial relations laws, the state wages policy has a direct impact on these negotiations, a point emphasised by Catholic employer representatives in all bargaining meetings. "Not a cent more, nor a day before," is their long-standing refrain.

The union's key claims, so far unaddressed by employers, include:

- pay teachers what they're worth
- give support staff a fair deal
- let teachers teach – cut paperwork
- allow time to plan – reduce the teaching load by two hours per week
- end staffing shortages.

Members in 540 Catholic systemic schools already conducted a full-day stop work on Friday 27 May. "I fully support the combined unions' Executive meeting," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch President Christine Wilkinson. "In the face of increasing workloads, teachers and support staff are completely exhausted and need the employers to recognise and act on the extreme pressures they're facing."

Contacts

Mark Northam, Secretary, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch, 0427 667 061

Media: Monica Crouch 0411 645 751 monica@ieu.asn.au

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 33,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.

Authorised by Mark Northam, Secretary, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch