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Teacher shortages: Independent schools must talk to education union

The IEU calls on the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) to consult with teachers through their representative union about its new strategy to attract and retain teachers. Known as Growing and Nurturing Educators (GANE), the strategy notes the severity of staff shortages and falling enrolments in teaching degrees, but is light on detail and solutions.

“The AIS has come late to this table,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Acting Secretary Carol Matthews. “The union has been warning for at least two years now that there was a staff shortage impacting independent schools, and it is unfortunate that both the AIS and individual schools have so far refused to discuss these issues with us.”

The IEU represents the industrial and professional interests of teachers and support staff in non-government schools.

“Our members in this sector are also reporting serious concerns about workload intensification as a result of staff shortages,” Matthews said. “Again, we urge the AIS and individual schools to conduct a thorough review of workloads and devise measures to mitigate the administrative burden that does not contribute to teaching and learning, alongside measures to address the crippling teacher shortage.”

In today’s *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Principal of Rosebank College in Five Dock, Iris Nastasi, echoes the IEU’s long-held concerns: “I don’t know a principal right now who isn’t grappling with shortages,” Nastasi said. “It’s the worst I’ve seen it.”

Along with staff shortages and workload intensity, one of the biggest issues impacting the teaching profession across both government and non-government schools is uncompetitive salaries. “The IEU will be closely monitoring salary movements for teachers in other sectors in coming months,” Matthews said. “And if these increases exceed those the AIS negotiated with the union in 2021, we will call on it to renegotiate pay rises.”

There were problems attracting and retaining staff before the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has certainly exacerbated the issue.

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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.

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