

# NewsExtra

8 March 2024

## **AIS Independent Schools (Steps) MEA**

The Association of Independent Schools (AIS) refused to bargain centrally with the IEU concerning pay increases in 2023 because the teacher and support staff multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) negotiated with the union in 2021 do not expire until 31 January 2025. These MEAs were negotiated in the period when inflation was much lower than now, the public sector pay cap limited pay rises for NSW Government teachers to 2.5% including superannuation, and schools were recovering from the disruption of COVID. Bargaining rights for employees were also much more limited than those existing under the current *Fair Work Act* provisions.

### **Unprecedented pay increases for staff in public and Catholic schools in 2023**

As a result of a new award applying to NSW Government schools and a new Catholic enterprise agreement made in Term 4 2023, teachers in NSW Government and Catholic systemic schools who have Proficient accreditation now progress automatically to \$122,000. This is an increase of 8% from the previous top rate of \$113,000.

Support staff in Catholic systemic schools also saw big pay increases in 2023 with a senior administrative employee now receiving over \$100,000 (“unaveraged” and discounted for term breaks) a year and an experienced learning support assistant being paid over \$88,000 (unaveraged).

Over 40 Catholic independent schools agreed in late 2023 to match the government rates (plus the traditional premium above paid in these schools) for teachers and flow on the support staff increases.

The IEU also reached agreement with nearly 25 Christian schools, represented by the AIS, to match the NSW Government teacher pay rises from February 2024 with improved parental leave and natural disaster leave for both teachers and support staff.

These increases took effect in a 2023 wages environment very different from that in previous years.

### **Teacher pay rates are now lower than government pay rates**

Following the pay increases in NSW Government and Catholic schools in Term 4 2023, some independent schools agreed to extra administrative pay increases above the MEA rates. However, the additional increases were often quite small and many schools did not increase pay rates at all.

Fair MEA pay rates remain crucial for members in all schools.

A comparison of teachers’ salaries under the Independent Schools NSW MEA with the rates applying to NSW Government and Catholic systemic teachers shows the AIS salaries are lower at all points of the pay scale (see the table on the next page). Even casual teacher daily rates are \$60 a day lower! And the disparity is worse the more experienced you are. So much for the traditional premium of around 5% – 7% that used to be enjoyed by teachers in AIS schools!

Comparison of Teacher Salaries:  
Independent Schools (Steps) MEA with NSW Government & Catholic Systemic Schools

Independent Schools MEA 1 Feb 2024		NSW Government & Catholic systemic Oct 2023		Difference
Step 5	81,885	Step 1	85,000	-3,115
Step 6	86,109	Step 2	91,413	-5,304
Step 7	90,322	Step 3	95,317	-4,995
Step 8	94,548	Step 4	99,220	-4,672
Step 9	98,761	Step 5	106,131	-7,370
Step 10	102,982	Step 6	114,115	-11,133
Step 11	107,203	Step 7	122,100	-14,897
Step 12	111,428		122,100	-10,672
Step 13	115,644		122,100	-6,456
ST1	120,515		122,100	-1,585
No Equivalent		Highly Accomplished Teacher	129,948	

### What's happening in 2024?

The IEU anticipates bargaining for new MEAs will commence in the first half of this year. It will be essential that in bargaining for new MEAs we ensure that rates of pay for teachers are substantially increased to maintain the traditional premium in pay for teachers in independent schools. This will inevitably involve consideration of whether the existing teacher pay structure is fit for purpose.

We also need to examine support staff pay rates – the current rates are clearly below those now in place in NSW Government and Catholic schools. For example, the top rate in a Catholic primary school for administrative staff is currently over \$100,000 whereas the top rate in an AIS school under the MEA is \$94,000. A similar disparity exists for school assistants and other support staff classifications.

And of course, conditions such as paid parental leave for both parents must be improved.

### What you can do

Please call a Chapter meeting at your school and invite your IEU Organiser to attend and:

1. Invite all members and non-members to attend. Discuss this NewsExtra.
2. Elect a Rep and a Chapter Committee – it helps to spread the word if you have a union team at your school, preferably involving both teachers and support staff.
3. Encourage your colleagues who have not yet joined the IEU to do so. [Click here to join.](#)

Under recent legislation passed by the federal Labor government, union delegates have the right to reasonably communicate with union members and employees eligible to be members. **This makes crystal clear your right to talk union business at work.**

