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Now's the time: Uniting for a whole new deal for staff in independent schools

The Independent Education Union has launched a campaign for a whole new deal for teachers and professional, administrative and operational staff in about 250 independent schools in NSW and the ACT that are represented by the Association of Independent Schools (AIS). New multi-enterprise agreements would cover more than 26,000 employees (teachers and support staff).

“The campaign was endorsed unanimously at the IEU’s quarterly Council meeting on 15 June after extensive consultation with members,” IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said.

The independent schools sector includes not just the big, well-known institutions, but also smaller schools including faith-based, community and alternative schools. The union says now’s the time to:

- **Fix pay:** Teachers in NSW government schools and Catholic systemic schools achieved unprecedented 8% pay rises in 2023. For many teachers in independent schools, pay rates in enterprise agreements are now lower than those for teachers in government schools.
- **Address workloads:** Staff in independent schools are struggling under unsustainable workloads. The union seeks clear, school-based standards around face-to-face teaching hours, the number of meetings, extra classes and playground duties, as well as requirements for attendance at weekend activities. Employers must implement the new legislated right to disconnect.
- **Boost parental leave:** Parental leave should be commensurate with other school sectors, and all parents (including fathers) who are the primary carers of their infants should receive a fair deal. Superannuation should be paid on parental leave.
- **A better deal for support staff:** Professional, administrative and operational staff in AIS schools are paid below their colleagues in NSW government and Catholic systemic schools at all points of the pay scale, and they have less leave. Again, it’s time to do better.
- **Guarantee fair processes:** The union calls for clear and transparent processes around promotions and flexible work arrangements, and for the right for staff to have the Fair Work Commission determine workplace disputes. Exemptions allowing discrimination on the basis of gender or disability should be scrapped. These rights are commonplace in other workplaces.

“We’ve had three bargaining meetings so far, but there’s still no pay or conditions offer on the table,” Matthews said.

“Our members in independent schools have seen their colleagues in other schools and systems campaign successfully for big pay rises and better conditions, so now’s the time for independent school employers to step up and recognise the work of staff through well-deserved improvements.

“We stand united for a whole new deal for all staff in AIS schools.”

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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 32,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.

Authorised by Carol Matthews, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary