

NewsExtra

4 December 2024

MEAs in NSW and ACT Independent Schools Outstanding Issues

As the 2024 school year comes to an end, the IEU wishes to update members on the status of bargaining with the Association of Independent Schools NSW ('AISNSW') regarding the Multi-Enterprise Agreements ('MEA') for teachers and professional and operational staff ('PAOS') in independent schools in NSW and ACT. The IEU remains committed to, and hopeful of, a swift resolution of the outstanding issues.

Teachers

In November 2024, the IEU received two versions of the 'final' draft of the proposed Teachers MEA. In each draft, including the most recent draft received on 18 November 2024, the IEU identified significant drafting errors. The AISNSW requested that the IEU provide comments on the 18 November draft within two days of receipt of the draft and to respond to each individual employer within one week to provide our written agreement to the draft. This time frame was never feasible given the complexity of the MEA in bringing together teachers from nine different industrial instruments with differing pay and conditions and given the number of errors in the earlier draft. The drafting problems are in addition to the unresolved issues.

Translocation problems

As we communicated in October, the IEU is still concerned with the AISNSW's proposal on how teachers will move to the new pay scale. Under the AISNSW's proposal, existing Proficient teachers in Band 2 with extensive teaching experience will get a **lower rate of pay** than new teachers employed in 2025 with the same experience. The problem is highlighted in **red** as shown in the [pay comparison tables for NSW teachers](#) and the [tables for ACT teachers](#). In effect, these teachers could earn between thousands of dollars less each year than their new colleagues throughout the life of the MEA.

IEU claim for workload transparency

Our claim is simple – we want all teachers to know the workload expectations at their school such as face-to-face teaching hours and extras. We are disappointed to know that our claim has been misrepresented as an attempt to standardise conditions across all schools. This is simply not true!

Some schools already provide this information to their staff via policies or handbooks. We are simply asking that all schools do this with their own staff at their school. As we have said all along, our claim is about fairness and transparency, not about uniformity.

Special Education allowance

The first draft MEA we received from the AIS in November excluded the special education allowance for teachers in schools for specific purposes. The intention to remove this allowance had never been communicated to either the union or teachers. When we raised this, the allowance was reinstated in the 18 November draft but only for existing teachers. This is unacceptable. All teachers, including new employees, should have access to this entitlement. We know that government schools offer this allowance. We do not believe it is fair that new teachers are missing out on this entitlement!

Professional and Operational Staff

The most recent draft of the MEA was provided to the IEU by the AISNSW on 20 November 2024. This draft contained many corrections in response to the IEU's comments on the earlier draft. The AISNSW requested that the IEU provide any further comments on the 20 November draft by the next day. In addition to the outstanding drafting issues, the IEU remains concerned that, while pay rates for some classifications have been increased, many employees still earn less than their colleagues in other education sectors.

Backpay

The IEU is not standing in the way of pay increases. The union cannot accept Teachers and PAOS MEAs which are full of errors. We made numerous attempts to engage the AISNSW to address the key issues we have highlighted above but they are unwilling to genuinely address the concerns of our members. There is no reason why schools should not offer backpay as they have been budgeted for. Schools **can** offer pay increases now OR backpay them later once the MEA is finalised. We have asked AISNSW to change their position ([click here](#)). **We firmly believe you have earned your pay rise.**

Next steps

Recent legislative changes mean that schools cannot proceed with a vote on the MEAs without our written agreement. Due to the unresolved issues outlined above, we determined that the draft MEAs were not ready for a staff vote and, as such, did not provide our written agreement. We cannot recommend that members vote on an MEA that does not offer backpay.

To move forward with the Teachers MEA, the IEU has sought assistance from the Fair Work Commission ('FWC') to conciliate the outstanding issues for teachers. On 29 November 2024, the **AISNSW refused consent for the FWC to assist the parties to resolve the outstanding issues.** We have written to AISNSW urging them to consent and offered to meet to discuss these issues. We are therefore left with no option but to proceed with our application for single interest bargaining. This step is necessary to ensure fairness and equity for teachers in independent schools. It seems the AISNSW is determined to hold up pay rises.

To assist the progress in bargaining in relation to the PAOS MEAs, the IEU has provided a long list of drafting and substantive issues, tracked changes to the draft and offered to meet with the AISNSW. We have also offered to meet on the Teachers MEA.

How you can support

This campaign is about fairness for all employees in independent schools. Your support is essential in ensuring that we protect your interests. Show your support by:

- **Staying informed:** visit our website regularly for updates and to find useful resources about the campaign.
- **Organising chapter meetings:** when school resumes next year, we encourage you to meet with your chapter and discuss these matters. Your chapter should pass a motion urging your school to address the union's concerns and commit to backpay.
- Invite non-member colleagues to [join the union](#) and strengthen our collective voice.

We are stronger together, and your support is vital as we continue this fight for fairness in independent schools.

