Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch

Media release

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Union welcomes inquiry's call for Redeemer Baptist to protect students, compensate staff

The union representing teachers and support staff in non-government schools in NSW and the ACT today welcomed the findings of a NSW parliamentary inquiry into Redeemer Baptist School in North Parramatta, which found a culture that put children and staff at significant risk of harm.

"It has been horrifying to learn how students and staff were treated at the school," said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "The NSW government must take urgent action to investigate the issues identified by the inquiry."

The inquiry chaired by NSW Greens MLC Abigail Boyd found the school did not meet child safety standards. It criticised regulatory authorities for failing to maintain sufficient oversight of the school, its operations and the wellbeing of staff and students.

The inquiry also found staff were denied essential workplace rights, including being paid wages and superannuation.

Matthews said the school's claim that its teachers and support staff were 'volunteers' and not employees was "hard to comprehend".

"It is absolutely unprecedented for a school to have its core functions performed by volunteers," she said. "This does not occur in any other school in NSW."

Matthews described the staffing arrangements at Redeemer Baptist as "exploitative".

"It's almost impossible for staff to leave because they did not receive pay and the school exerted a high degree of financial control over them," she said. "This has had a chilling effect on staff seeking union support."

The inquiry's finding come as the IEU pursues a claim in the Federal Court to recover payment for former members of staff at Redeemer Baptist.

The union is seeking compensation for staff members who were not paid while engaged to perform work.

"The union is determined to ensure the school meets its legal obligations to staff," Matthews said. "This includes proper payment of wages, superannuation and all other entitlements."

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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