

Enterprise Bargaining Vote: FAQs

What does the bargaining process involve?

Enterprise bargaining is the process of negotiation generally between the AEU and the ACT Government, with the goal of making an enterprise agreement. It is how we set the working conditions of teachers and (ultimately) the learning conditions of our students. That's why enterprise bargaining is so important to our work as teacher-unionists.

The ACT Government has finalised the draft agreement for consideration.

Where are we at in the process?

At the conclusion of the consideration period, the agreement will be put to ballot. That agreement, with its improved pay and workload reduction measures, will not be in place until it has been voted on and approved by the Fair Work Commission.

We acknowledge the work that has gone into producing a teacher pay deal that is the best in the country and will result in ACT teachers earning considerably more than their interstate counterparts.

While further detail is to be developed on workload reduction measures, no workload reduction will occur until those measures are agreed and are being implemented.

What are we asking for? What conditions?

We have a comprehensive set of claims in relation to workloads, pay and school resourcing that aims to genuinely reform the way our schools work. Some of the main claims we have include:

- **Let teachers teach.** We need dedicated time outside of the classroom where teachers are free to conduct their own professional duties.

- Reduce the red tape, over-reporting and duplication of work.
- Resource schools properly not just for student learning conditions, but also to ensure that staff can access their workplace rights and entitlements.
- Pay teachers a fair wage that is comparable to similar professions.
- Recognise that all work should be paid work and stop relying on volunteering and goodwill to run our schools.
- **Let leaders lead.** School leaders need time and resources to be educational leaders. This means that for school leaders we must: reduce the red tape, over-reporting, unnecessary compliance requirements and other responsibilities that have crept into a school leaders workload that should be performed by other agencies or parts of the Education Directorate.

We're not just asking for these things because they benefit teachers. Because of the national teacher shortage, thousands of students in the ACT miss out on a dedicated teacher every day because their class is split, collapsed or cancelled. Our students deserve better, but spiralling workloads and unpaid overtime are driving good people out of our profession.

What is on offer?

The offer includes improvements to both pay and conditions, with a particular focus on workload reduction measures. It is an offer that will see the ACT extend its lead over other jurisdictions as the best-paid teachers and school leaders in the nation.

Classroom teachers will receive pay increases of between 4.2% and 8.8% annualised, or between 12.6 and 26.5% over three years.

School leaders will receive increases of between 10.5% and 12.7% over three years.

Note that the ACT is already the highest paid jurisdiction.

Full pay tables are available in the draft agreement that has been sent to all staff.

There are also a series of substantive improvements to working conditions. These include three additional pupil-free days, recognition of release time to complete planning and preparation and the centralisation of functions like building services to take the administrative burden away from schools.

Most importantly, the agreement includes a commitment to continue to identify systemic workload reduction measures over the life of the agreement through a Sustainable Workload Management Committee.

Why are the increases higher for lower paid (less experienced) workers?

While the AEU's claim was for the same percentage pay increase across the whole workforce, the Government's offer delivers bigger increases for those on lower rates of pay. This means that, while top-of-the-scale teachers and school leaders are receiving a nation-leading pay increase, these increases look smaller in percentage terms when compared to the increases being made to early-to-mid career teacher pay.

The main reason for this is that the pay offer addresses a competitive disadvantage with Catholic system schools. At present, a teacher stands to earn as much as \$50,000 more over their first five years in the Catholic system because they have eliminated pay increments early in the salary scale. To compete with this, it was necessary to eliminate the same salary points in our agreement, resulting in very large pay increases over the lower to middle teaching classifications.

In addition to this factor, the ACT Government's core pay offer for all public servants deliberately targets those on lower incomes for higher pay increases. They say that this is to provide greater assistance to those on low incomes, who are more heavily impacted by cost of living increases.

We have been able to achieve a better pay offer than the core offer to all public servants by making changes to classifications for classroom teachers and school leaders B and

C, as well as achieving an additional increase in the percentage pay rise for Principals.

How does this compare to other pay offers?

It is a significantly better offer than other employees and their unions have been able to achieve and is particularly outstanding for early-to-mid-career teachers.

For classroom teachers, the offer is for increases of between 4.2% and 8.8% per annum. The Wage Price Index (the average pay increase measure by the ABS) for public sector workers is currently 2.8% per annum. Other teachers who have recently signed on to new enterprise agreements have received average pay increases around the 2.5-3.5% per annum mark.

In comparison to the pay on offer for teachers in other states and territories, we were already the best-paid in the nation. This offer would extend that lead, as we are receiving higher percentage pay increases than have been offered elsewhere.

At the top of the classroom teacher salary scale, a classroom teacher will earn nearly \$130,000 a year. This is approximately \$11,000 more per year than the next highest-paid teachers. A teacher with Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher certification will earn \$136,601.

Don't we get a pay increase anyway? I've heard that some workers received very large increases from the Fair Work Commission?

The Fair Work Commission has announced increases to the minimum wage and award wages to commence on July 1, 2023. The minimum wage in Australia will be \$859.32 for a 38-hour week, before tax.

Award covered employees are typically on much lower wages than those who have a union-negotiated Enterprise Agreement. The only way for us to get a pay increase is through a new enterprise agreement.

Salaries for ACT Public School teachers greatly exceed the award rate, which is currently set at

\$82,152 for a teacher who does not have Highly Accomplished or Lead certification. This is nearly \$50,000 less than our salaries by the end of this agreement.

**Will this offer attract and retain teachers?
Does it meet evidence-based
recommendations for teacher pay?**

According to the best available evidence, this pay offer will do what is needed to attract and retain teachers.

According to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, starting pay of \$90k+ (the highest amount considered) would improve the likelihood of graduates choosing teaching by ~13%. We will meet this mark over the term of this agreement.

Additionally, top pay of \$130k (the highest amount considered) would improve the likelihood of graduates choosing teaching by ~14%. Again, we will substantially achieve this mark by the end of the agreement.

The Agreement will meet or exceed the marks set by the Gallop Inquiry into teacher attraction and retention in NSW.

Did the union fight for a better pay increase/conditions?

This most recent offer is the third we have received, with each offer being improved following union advocacy.

For example, the initial government offer was only 3.5% per annum for a top-of-the-scale teacher and 2.8% for top Principals. The improvements we negotiated see top teachers now being offered 4.2% and Principals 3.5% per annum.

Where our advocacy has been most successful is early-to-mid-career teachers, who were initially offered a maximum 4.25% per annum and are now being offered between 6.3% and 8.8% per annum.

We estimate that union advocacy has led to an increased investment in teacher and school leader pay of at least \$100 million compared to the initial government offer.

What about workloads?

Our Enterprise Agreement already has some of the strongest workload protections available. However, workloads continue to come under pressure due to staff shortages, under-resourcing and pressure to do non-teaching work.

The new agreement will build on an already strong base of workload protections with substantive measures like additional pupil-free days and the investment of millions of dollars in centralising building services.

For the first time, our agreement will recognise that “release” time is required for teachers to plan and prepare, reducing the amount of time in which teachers and school leaders can be directed towards administrative and non-teaching activities.

Most importantly, we will continue to reduce workloads as the agreement is implemented. The Sustainable Workload Management Committee (SWMC) will work to reduce system-level workload over the life of the agreement. It will include representatives from the employer, the union and every sector and category of employee.

The primary focus of the SWMC will be on ensuring that teachers and school leaders are able to spend their time on teaching and learning, and that appropriate support is provided so that other duties can be passed on to more appropriate staff or referred to the Education Support Office.

Some of the workload issues that the Sustainable Workload Management Committee will be asked to consider include:

- Workload associated with additional student need (such as OVRAs, ILPs and PBSPs)
- School administration tasks that can be centrally-managed or provided through system-level contracts
- The effectiveness of existing ICT systems, such as Riskman and Sentral

- Administrative tasks for school psychologists that can be eliminated, streamlined or completed by other staff
- Measures to ensure that community expectations of schools are reasonable.

How do I vote?

To vote in the upcoming ballot, you will receive an email from the ACT Education Directorate with a link. The email will also contain a unique identifier code. Click on the link, enter the code, and follow the instructions to vote.

Internet access is required as all voting is through electronic voting.

When does voting open?

Voting will occur between 14-27 June, 2023. All votes must be submitted online. Please check your email for a message from the ACT Education Directorate. It will contain a link and a unique identifier code. Click the link, enter the code, and follow the instructions to vote.

What happens once a majority of employees vote in favour of an EA?

Once an EA is endorsed by a majority of employees it's sent to the Fair Work Commission for approval to ensure it complies with the Fair Work Act. The new agreement comes into force shortly after it is approved by the Commission and you will receive a sign on bonus and back pay.

Will we get back pay when the agreement is approved?

Yes! Even better, you will also receive a cost-of-living payment of \$1,250. While we were not due to receive another pay increase until 1 March 2023, the back pay will run from January 2023, giving members a small bonus over the usual pay cycle.

For an average teacher, the amount of back pay and the cost of living payment will be approximately \$2,700 in total. This is in addition to the ongoing pay increases that you will receive.

What happens if the agreement is not supported in the ballot?

If the ballot does not return a yes vote, we risk

undermining the pay and conditions on offer including back pay and the one-off cost of living payment, as well as workload reduction measures including pupil-free days. It will likely cause significant delays to getting a new agreement on the table.

For the agreement to be supported, we need a majority of workers to vote yes. Every single AEU member vote is crucial.

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