

AEU ACT Branch teaching staff log of claims, June 2025

Recognise and reward experience now

Experienced teachers and school leaders are central to these claims. You are the people who have given years of your time, hard work and expertise to our schools. The institutional knowledge you carry, the mentoring you provide, the classroom mastery you have developed – your work deserves top-tier recognition.

The last bargaining round delivered exceptional increases for early and mid-career teachers. While experienced teachers and school leaders supported this outcome, many felt overlooked by the ACT Government's wages policy that prioritised lower-paid workers. It was right to accept a deal that made **historic gains** in a time of critical teacher shortages, but your years of commitment deserved better recognition.

What we proved in that round of bargaining is **our collective strength**. Our union secured a deal that became the **national benchmark for teachers at all levels**, including those at the top of the scale. Nobody else can replicate the relationships, the track record, and the collective strength we've built together. **Our union** delivered those historic increases, and **we're the ones positioned to deliver for experienced teachers and school leaders now**.

We're entering this bargaining round with **unprecedented support**: commitments from government, opposition, and crossbench that ACT teachers will be Australia's highest paid—not just early career teachers, but all teachers. We're committed to ensuring experienced teachers and school leaders are valued.

Prioritising experience benefits everyone. Research shows teacher effectiveness increases significantly with experience.

Experienced educators deliver better student outcomes, drive school culture and professional learning, mentor beginning teachers (reducing turnover), understand curriculum deeply and manage complex classroom dynamics. You are critical to our success.

The cost of losing experienced teachers and school leaders is enormous. Recruitment, training, and the disruption to school communities far outweighs investment in retention. Every jurisdiction struggling with teacher shortages wishes they had kept their experienced educators.

The ACT has a choice: recognise and reward experience now or face the expensive consequences of losing it later.

Recognise our experience

The ACT public education system depends on the expertise of experienced educators. For the sake of our schools and our students, we must reward longevity and professional growth.

1. **Recognise and reward experience:** Introduce remuneration and improved conditions for experienced staff that incentivise staying in the job. Experience at-level is hugely valuable to our schools and should be recognised.
2. **Nation leading pay:** ACT teachers, school psychologists and school leaders must be the highest paid in Australia.
3. **Real wages increase:** Salary increases must ensure AEU members see real-terms wage growth in every year of the agreement.
4. **Annual leave loading equity:** Extend annual leave loading to all school leaders under the same provisions that apply to classroom teachers and school psychologists.
5. **Employer-funded registration:** The employer should pay annual professional registration fees, recognising this as an essential cost of maintaining a qualified workforce.
6. **Better recognise inclusion work:** Increase the existing special education allowance, ensure that the criteria for receiving the allowance are clear and the allowance aligns with current inclusion education practices. Clarify eligibility to ensure all educators working in specialist settings (including flexible education) receive the allowance.

Respect our leaders

School leadership roles are increasingly complex and demanding, yet current structures fail to provide adequate recognition, career pathways, or support systems. Valuing education means respecting school leaders.

7. **Principal classification reform:** Fix the principal pay structure, which currently creates a disincentive for mobility and provides no recognition or reward for experience.
8. **School leader role clarity:** School Leaders B and C are crucial, but their work is often overlooked and misunderstood. Commit to a joint AEU-Education Directorate review of these positions that genuinely listens to the needs of SLB and SLC AEU members, covering role clarity, job demands, career development, face to face teaching hours, release time and support.
9. **Higher duties from day one:** Eliminate the qualifying period for higher duties allowance. On every occasion someone is required to perform higher duties, regardless of duration, they must receive appropriate remuneration.
10. **Improve school leader recruitment:** Reform school leader recruitment processes to provide consistency, meaningfully recognise school leader expertise and experience, and enhance career development opportunities.
11. **School leader recovery leave:** Make recovery leave available to all principals and SLBs. Recovery leave acknowledges that our system demands periods of excessive hours from principals and SLBs and provides a mechanism to ensure they can take periods of genuine rest.

Fix our system

Systemic under-resourcing, inadequate workforce planning and outdated class sizes create unsustainable pressures on schools and staff. Fundamental reforms are needed to ensure every school has the staffing, resources, and support structures necessary to deliver quality and safe education.

- 12. Guaranteed minimum staffing structure:** Establish and fund minimum school staffing structure. This must address the needs of schools to have a diverse range of professionals to support our students. A guaranteed minimum staffing structure must address the need for every school to have sufficient school leaders, classroom teachers, as well as classroom support with LSAs, effective access to school psychologists, specialist program teachers, dedicated qualified teacher librarians, qualified career development practitioners, and sufficient administrative support for teaching staff and school leaders. The system must take responsibility for ensuring every school gets the resourcing it needs, including clear system-wide workforce planning to ensure consistency while still allowing schools to make decisions informed by their local context.
- 13. Effective management of teacher absence:** Reform the way that schools manage teacher absences, to minimise splitting or collapsing of classes and protect the integrity of specialist programs (such as EAL/D, library and MTSS). Schools must have access to funds to engage relief teachers every time they are needed, and sufficient administrative support to deal with staffing fluctuations.
- 14. Clear provision of safety at work:** The EA should reflect clear expectations and processes to protect educator safety, including in relation to psychosocial safety. This should include system-wide procedures for preventing and managing occupational violence.
- 15. Review the Student Resource Allocation:** The expectation of schools has changed markedly over the last decade, but this has not been reflected in the way that schools are resourced. Conduct an independent review of the SRA to consider:
 - a. How much money schools receive
 - b. What they are expected to achieve with it
 - c. Whether that money is sufficient to achieve what is expected
 - d. When schools should receive information about budgets (timeliness)
 - e. Whether there are specific funding considerations that should be a central cost and managed by ESO
- 16. Class sizes that support fair workloads, safe classrooms and inclusive practice:** Establish fair and reasonable class sizes that take student complexity into account and ensure necessary extra support is always delivered. Introduce hard caps that can never be exceeded, specify reductions where there is increased complexity, set target class sizes below the caps and identify the support that will be provided where class sizes are above target levels. Address the disparity between lower and upper primary.

Value our time

Educators' time is increasingly fragmented by competing demands and compliance requirements that detract from core teaching and learning activities. Streamlined approaches and appropriate recognition for additional responsibilities are essential to restore focus on educational outcomes.

- 17. Purpose-driven professional learning and collaboration:** Replace the current overlapping professional learning frameworks in the enterprise agreement (N7 - Annual Professional Learning Program & N8 – Professional Learning Community Program) with a single, streamlined approach. The current dual framework creates unnecessary complexity and places an excessive time burden on staff. This claim seeks to refocus professional learning on meaningful professional growth rather than prescriptive compliance.
- 18. Mentor recognition:** Experienced teachers and school psychologists who mentor early career teachers and school psychologists must be compensated for the crucial work they do in growing the next generation of teachers and school psychologists.
- 19. Early career support:** Review New Educator Support Program to ensure it is underpinned by evidence of best practice. At a school level, ensure that early career teachers and school psychologists and their mentors can identify and pursue the development each new educator and school psychologist needs.
- 20. Remuneration for overnight work:** Teachers should not have to volunteer out-of-hours to provide educational experiences for students. Where any staff member must work overnight (such as on a camp or other excursion), they should receive appropriate remuneration.

Support our people

Specialised roles require targeted support and recognition to ensure professional effectiveness and retention. Current arrangements often fail to acknowledge the unique contributions and challenges faced by diverse educator roles. Support for all staff must be at the heart of what we do.

- 21. School psychologist review:** Conduct a comprehensive review into school psychologist conditions focused on improving recruitment and retention. The review must more clearly define the psychologist role, set reasonable expectations on workloads, and provide structured support to new psychologists. Psychologists must have competitive employment conditions that recognise the specialised expertise of school psychologists and their essential support to schools, staff and students.
- 22. First Nations mentor program:** Establish a First Nations teacher mentor program, with compensation to facilitate mentoring of early career First Nations teachers by experienced First Nations teachers. This initiative recognises the critical role that culturally responsive mentorship plays in recruitment and retention of First Nations teachers.
- 23. VET teacher recognition:** Provide compensation to VET teachers that recognises their additional qualifications, their need to maintain dual qualifications and industry currency, and their additional marking load.
- 24. Relief teacher support:** Ensure that relief teachers can access information essential for student learning and workplace safety. This includes adequate provision of ICT hardware and access to EDU digital systems.
- 25. Teacher librarian role clarity:** Teacher librarians support student literacy, research skills, and digital citizenship, all crucial for academic success. The work involved in maintaining a school library is complex and requires dedicated time and resources. Teacher librarians need an articulated role description and workload protections.