

Australia: Queensland teachers strike for first time in 16 years

Our reporters
4 August 2025

Public school teachers across the northern Australian state of Queensland will strike for 24 hours on Wednesday to oppose chronic understaffing, insurmountable workloads, occupational violence and low wages.

Teachers are outraged by the attempts of the Liberal National Party (LNP) state government to impose a wage “increase” that will do nothing to compensate for previous low-pay trade union-government deals and the soaring cost of living.

The stoppage will be the first such action in 16 years. It comes after an almost unanimous vote last month of the Queensland Teachers Union’s (QTU) 48,000 members in a ballot calling for a series of 24-hour strikes.

The strike vote followed the QTU’s rejection of Premier David Crisafulli’s enterprise bargaining pay offer of 8 percent over three years—the same state wage-cutting policy impacting nurses and other workers in the public service.

The QTU leadership described this as “an affront,” but has not proposed any joint action with the nurses and other public sector workers.

There is no lack of determination of teachers to fight for improved salaries and working conditions. The QTU leaders’ purpose in calling the strike, however, is to let off steam, and push through another sell-out deal.

For more than six months the government and union representatives have undertaken protracted backroom discussions—some 17 in all—over an enterprise bargaining agreement due to expire on June 30. QTU president Cresta Richardson has described these discussions as “productive and constructive.”

Shortly before the ballot for industrial action closed, the LNP government referred the dispute to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC), triggering a conciliation process, in a clear attempt to avert strike action.

The QIRC is an arm of the state, dedicated to enforcing the austerity agenda of government and big business. Richardson’s response was to promote the QIRC as an independent umpire, declaring that the QTU “looks forward to presenting its claim before the commission.”

That must be a warning that the QTU is preparing to use the “conciliation” process to try to impose another betrayal, as it did repeatedly under the previous state Labor government from 2015 to 2024.

The QTU leadership has refused to outline any concrete demands, either on pay or working conditions. It is merely pleading that the LNP government delivers on its phoney election promise of “nation-leading wages” and “an immediate improvement” on working conditions.

This is to create the conditions where even the most paltry “improved” offer, which would do nothing to address the depth of the crisis facing teachers, can be hailed as a “win.”

For his part, Queensland Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek told the media that the strike was “a regular part of the negotiation process... It’s not as if you can sit down and sort out a deal. We’ve made a couple of offers to the teachers’ union and they of course have been rejected.”

Teachers need to recall the QTU’s sellout in the last enterprise agreement it struck with the Palaszczuk Labor government in 2022. Refusing to publish the agreement in full, the QTU urged its members to accept a three-year agreement that further cut real wages and did nothing to address staff shortages or intolerable workloads.

The 2022 deal offered an 11 percent pay rise over three years under conditions where the official annual inflation rate in Brisbane, the state capital, was 6 percent. On working conditions, the agreement put off any possible improvements on staffing, workloads and the public schools funding crisis until a promised review, which was due at the end of 2024.

The Crisafulli government is currently refusing to release the review report. Yet the media hailed the 2022 sellout as a “massive wages win.”

The poor conditions that Queensland’s state schoolteachers confront are the direct responsibility of the QTU. Like their counterparts in other states, the QTU executives have for decades collaborated with state governments, whether Labor or Liberal, as they have slashed funding while striking one industrial agreement after another, entrenching intolerable conditions and suppressing wages.

Successive federal and state governments have underfunded public schools. The Save Our Schools Australia group estimates that the underfunding of Queensland state’s schools amounts to \$1.7 billion this year alone, while private schools are vastly overfunded.

This has led to surging enrolments in private schools, leaving public schools enrolling a grossly disproportionate number of students with high needs. The complexity of teaching students with special needs has increased while class sizes have either remained the same for decades or increased.

Conditions in government schools are so bad that the number of teachers resigning in Queensland has more than doubled since 2020. The government is increasingly replacing them with unqualified staff, university students and graduates yet to be registered to teach in schools, including students in their first two years of education study.

The key issue is how the struggle of teachers is to be taken forward. Teachers in every state are facing the same deliberately engineered privatisation of school education which has led to public schools, especially those in working-class areas, being increasingly regarded as residual “safety nets” for those whose parents cannot afford private school fees.

On social media, teachers throughout the country are cheering on the Queensland teachers’ strike and asking why they can’t join in. Victorian educators are also waging a struggle for decent salaries and working conditions, after a bitter sellout by the Australian Education Union (AEU) in 2022 left Victorian teachers the lowest paid in the country.

The QTU, like its state counterparts, works to keep teachers isolated and the campaign limited as they plead with the government to return to the bargaining table. The once in 16-year strike, called without a concrete log of claims, is aimed at a defeat, not a victory.

To prevent another betrayal, rank-and-file committees,

independent of the trade union apparatuses and democratically controlled by educators themselves, must be built in the schools. Through such committees, educators from all corners of the sector, from schools to TAFE colleges and universities, can prepare a unified struggle.

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the educators’ rank-and-file network, advances the necessity for a political fight against the subordination of all human needs, including for education, to the profit demands of big business.

As the CFPE explained in its opening statement for 2025:

The CFPE calls for the widest discussion among educators on the necessity for an internationalist and socialist program, which would involve the establishment of a workers’ government and the implementation of policies based on social need, not private profit, including free, high-quality education for all from kindergarten to the tertiary level.

With public education under attack globally, the CFPE works closely with educators’ rank-and-file committees internationally developed through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

For assistance to establish rank-and-file committees, please contact the CFPE:

Contact the CFPE:

Email: cfpe.aus@gmail.com

Facebook: facebook.com/commforpubliceducation

Twitter: [CFPE_Australia](https://twitter.com/CFPE_Australia)

Facebook: facebook.com/groups/opposeaeusellout



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact