

Australia: Queensland teachers walk off the job for the first time in 16 years

Our reporters
8 August 2025

As many as 50,000 public school teachers walked off the job for 24 hours on Wednesday, in what is being described as the largest teachers' strike in the history of the northern Australian state of Queensland. Teachers are demanding higher pay, increased staffing levels, safe working conditions and a reduction in intolerable workloads.

Up to 30 rallies were held in Brisbane, the state capital, and in regional cities and towns across the state in protest against the state Liberal National Party (LNP) government's 8 percent pay offer over three years. The strike was the first such action called by the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) in 16 years.

Teachers carried hand-made placards highlighting the escalating crisis in public schools across the state. Among them were:

"23-'25 Qld, Rent up 60 percent, Power up 38 percent, Bread up 24 percent, Teacher pay up 10 percent," "8 percent, that's an F," "Release the funds," "Fix the teacher shortage," "No pay, No respect, No teachers, Is that the plan?"

The 24-hour strike was backed by wide support from the population. The Murdoch media's Brisbane tabloid, the *Courier Mail*, admitted that a majority of its readers supported the teachers' demands.

In Brisbane, more than 4,000 QTU members attended a one-hour meeting which was live streamed to teachers at venues across the state. They then marched across the Brisbane River to the state parliament house.

While teachers showed every determination to fight the government's below-inflation pay offer, with nothing on workload or staffing levels, QTU officials are working to contain and dissipate the anger and shut down industrial action.

Inside the strike meeting, QTU president Cresta Richardson declared, to applause: "Today we draw a line in the sand. Today we are making history because it is the right thing to do. Ensuring that Queensland schools have the right numbers."

Speaking to the media at the strike rally, she claimed: "We

want to have in our package, things that are concrete and meaningful and measurable." All this is completely bogus.

Over the past six months and in the course of 18 meetings with the state education department, the QTU leadership has refused to outline any concrete demands, either on pay or working conditions, in order to create a scenario in which even the most minimal government offer, which will do nothing to stem the ongoing exodus of educators from public schools, can be hailed as a "victory."

The QTU's hour-length broadcast to teachers was deliberately filled with vaguely-worded speeches from union executives and union-approved speakers. Significantly, no time was allowed for debate and discussion. No date was set for the next strike, despite teachers previously having voted almost unanimously in a ballot last month for "a series of 24-strikes."

On social media, teachers have called for the QTU to devise an actual log of claims. As one teacher posted: "The QTU hasn't even detailed to its own members what it's asking for. They're using abstract language like 'retention and attraction' and 'workplace violence.' But what concrete innovations, measurables, are they asking for in our workplaces, on our behalf, that will counter these problems? Ask teachers... they will provide a few suggestions, I'm sure."

Premier David Crisafulli's government is pursuing the same wage-cutting policy against nurses and other workers in the public service. But the QTU leadership has not proposed any joint action with the nurses and other public sector workers, nor with teachers in Victoria and other states, who face similar conditions.

There are clear danger signs of another QTU sellout, as occurred during the previous Labor state government from 2015 to 2024.

The last enterprise agreement that the QTU struck with the Palaszczuk Labor government in 2022 cut real wages and did nothing to address staff shortages or intolerable workloads. The 2022 deal involved an 11 percent pay rise over three years, when the official annual inflation rate in

Brisbane was 6 percent. The agreement put off any possible improvements on staffing, workloads and the funding crisis until a promised review, which was due at the end of 2024, but which the LNP government has refused to release.

On Thursday, the QTU rushed back into backroom talks in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC). Richardson is promoting the conception that the QIRC is an independent umpire. It is a thoroughly anti-worker institution, an instrument of big business and the state government, functioning to enforce their demands and suppress opposition from workers.

Supposedly, the LNP government has now come up with a few “sweeteners.” It will consider a cost-of-living increase “if inflation rises above expectations” and an additional student-free day, which teachers argue will only add to their existing workload. There is a divisive, higher salary offer to experienced senior teachers amounting to around \$5,000 annually, a beginning-teacher one-off lump sum payment of \$400, a \$100 per-night allowance for teachers supervising student camps, and the right for teachers in regional areas to cash in five of their annual holidays.

These measures would do nothing to address the workplace conditions facing teachers. Across Australia, there have been decades of public school underfunding, removing desperately needed support for teachers and students. Industrial agreements have exacerbated intolerable workloads and suppressed wages.

This is the product of the collaboration between teacher union bureaucracies, and state and federal Labor and Liberal National governments, implemented through instrumentalities like the industrial relations courts.

In order to defeat yet another cut to real wages and take forward their fight for improved conditions, teachers will have to take matters into their own hands.

Rank-and-file committees, independent of the QTU or any other trade union, need to be established in every school. Only through such committees, can teachers fight for demands based on their actual needs, and those of the public education system as a whole, not what governments or union bureaucrats say is “affordable.”

This month the federal Labor government will be joined by four senior officials of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in an “Economic Reform Roundtable.” The ACTU chiefs will assist in the task of boosting national productivity—code words for further cutting workers’ real wages and conditions.

This agenda includes slashing social spending to satisfy the profit demands of the ruling capitalist class, while boosting military spending to prepare for war. The QTU bureaucrats, like all their trade union counterparts, are committed to this offensive.

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the educators’ rank-and-file network supported by the Socialist Equality Party, is fighting for a socialist perspective for fully-funded, high quality education with decent pay and conditions for all workers.

In its opening statement for 2025, the CFPE advanced demands that include the following, as the starting point for the widest discussion among teachers and school workers across the country:

- An immediate 40 percent pay increase with salaries indexed against inflation, and automatic cost-of-living adjustments.

- Maximum class sizes of 15-20. End administrative burdens so teachers can focus on teaching.

- A minimum of 8 hours weekly during school hours for planning, assessment and collaboration.

- Abolish NAPLAN and other regressive standardised testing measures that legitimise funding cuts for “underperforming” schools.

- End the authoritarian imposition of mandatory teaching methods—teachers must have the democratic right to collectively decide on curriculum implementation.

- Hire thousands of teachers and support staff to end punishing workloads. At least one support teacher must be employed full-time per class.

- Fully funded support services for all students, including those with diverse needs. Employ psychologists in every school.

- Initiate a high-quality school construction program in working-class communities. No public funds for elite private schools; invest billions in public education for a free, first-class education for all.

We pledge every assistance to educators seeking to establish rank-and-file committees in schools and encourage you to contact the CFPE to discuss this perspective.

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