

# Australia: Queensland Teachers Union calls off strike

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The Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) last Friday cancelled a 24-hour stoppage, scheduled for this Thursday, within hours of announcing it. Instead, it asked teachers to join after-school rallies, in their own time.

The union had only initially called the strike in an attempt to head off teachers' opposition to a union-state Liberal National Party (LNP) state government deal, which teachers overwhelmingly voted against.

The deal amounted to another real wage cut. It promised a nominal 8 percent pay "increase" over three years, as official inflation resurges to 5.2 percent annually, with housing, electricity and food prices rising far higher. To put the offer into context, rents have increased in Brisbane, the state capital, by as much as 41 percent since 2021.

The sellout deal would also have retained the intolerable working conditions responsible for unprecedented teacher resignations. Record numbers of union members cast their votes on a union-backed ballot, with almost 68 percent rejecting it.

The QTU's latest strike backflip comes as teacher unions across the country face intensifying discontent among educators, reflected in stoppages by teachers in Tasmania and protests in Victoria, against Labor and Liberal-National governments alike. But the teacher unions nationally, represented by the Australian Education Union (AEU), have opposed any unified struggle.

QTU president Cresta Richardson told the media that the strike was cancelled because it would clash with senior student exams. That is an obvious fraud.

During the exam period, Year 12 students are not at school. They are on study leave. They attend school only when an exam is being conducted. Teachers do not supervise the exams, a role undertaken by external invigilators.

Moreover, social media posts show students and parents

supporting their teachers' fight for better conditions. Many teachers are angry.

An educator wrote on the QTU's Facebook page: "I'm questioning why I'm even a member of this union. The bargaining team have made no progress at all from my viewpoint. There's been no negotiation on salaries... And improved conditions... what improvements?"

"What have you been doing all this time other than being manipulated by the department? It's time to be transparent with members as we're getting frustrated."

Another posted on a teachers Facebook site: "We voted to strike, not go on pointless rallies. How dare the exec IGNORE its members. If alternative action is proposed, then it needs to be VOTED on."

Another commented: "Is this not a joke at this time of year??A strike would be so much better than instead of teachers going to a rally. We still have to get the job done while fighting for our rights! Better decisions need to be made. And also, the disruption of a strike is so much more effective than a rally that doesn't cause disruption."

Queensland public school teachers have been subjected to a protracted QTU-government dispute over a new enterprise bargaining agreement, Enterprise Bargaining (EB) 11, which was due to commence on July 1.

In August, 50,000 public school teachers across Queensland walked off the job for 24 hours, to express their outrage at the LNP government's offer, which did nothing to compensate for previous pay-cutting QTU-government deals. The stoppage was the first the QTU had called in 16 years. The largest teacher strike in the state's history, it won widespread support, including among parents and students.

The *World Socialist Web Site* warned from the outset that the QTU officials called the strike to contain and dissipate teacher anger. They have worked desperately to wind back industrial action. The record is clear:

**August 6:** Teachers struck for 24 hours, demanding

higher pay, increased staffing levels, safe working conditions and a reduction in intolerable workloads. At a QTU meeting in Brisbane, 4,000 teachers voted for a “series of 24-hour strikes” if their demands were not met.

**August 7:** Refusing to name a date for the next strike, QTU executives rushed into closed-door conciliation talks with government representatives.

**August 15:** As teachers demanded further industrial action, the QTU gave the government a two-week ultimatum, threatening further strikes if a better offer was not received.

**August 29:** The QTU told members that further strikes would be “paused.”

**October 26:** The LNP government thanked the QTU for “negotiating in good faith” over several months and announced a deal similar to the ones teachers had already rejected. The QTU claimed to be neutral, but said the “package” represented “real progress for our profession.”

**October 27:** The QTU gave its members just four days to read the union’s limited summary of the deal and vote in a union-controlled ballot. The deal was resoundingly rejected.

**November 1:** The union’s state council voted for another 24-hour strike “within three weeks.” However, the QTU executives appealed to the government for a revised deal, hoping to head off any strike action.

**November 7:** At 12 midday, the QTU announced a one-day strike on November 13. At 5pm, the union reversed the decision.

The QTU has requested a miserly interim 3 percent payment, presumably while the case goes through a protracted Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) arbitration process. This is a clear warning that the union is prepared to settle for the pay “rises” the government is demanding and will continue to do nothing in terms of workload reduction, teacher safety or staff shortages.

QTU leaders have promoted the conception that fair pay and conditions can be won through the QIRC. The QIRC is an instrument of big business and the state government.

The QTU has imposed Interest Based Bargaining (IBB), which explores “the common interests” between workers and their bosses. Under the IBB process, teachers are not even allowed to know the details of discussions between the union and the state government.

The QTU is holding out the possibility of another 24-hour strike this year. If it indeed takes place, its aim will be to placate teachers while the union prepares

another sellout.

So long as teachers remain under the control of the union bureaucrats, the only possible outcome is a sellout.

A fake “left” group, the Socialist Alternative’s QLD Teachers Fightback, is making minor criticisms of the QTU leaders but insisting that teachers must remain tied to the QTU apparatus. Despite decades of QTU betrayals, it describes the QTU’s backdowns as “incredibly disappointing.”

Regardless, the group is urging teachers to “call on the union to issue a special strike directive!” In effect, it is covering up the union’s track record and declaring that no alternative exists or can be built.

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the educator’s rank-and file network, says the opposite. New organisations of struggle, rank-and-file committees, independent of the trade unions, are required in every school, democratically controlled by teachers themselves.

These committees can unite with teachers, health workers and all public sector workers in the fight against the state and federal government agenda of austerity and war preparations.

While starving public schools and universities of funds, the Albanese Labor government is pouring billions of dollars into military spending for the AUKUS pact against China, while backing the Gaza genocide and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

The CFPE advances the necessity for a political fight against the subordination of all human needs, including education, to the profit demands of big business. We urge teachers to contact the CFPE to discuss forming rank-and-file committees.

#### Contact the CFPE:

Email: cfpe.aus@gmail.com

Facebook: facebook.com/commforpubliceducation

Twitter: CFPE\_Australia



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**