

# Australia: Thousands of Queensland teachers join second one-day strike

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On Tuesday, thousands of teachers across the Australian northern state of Queensland joined their second 24-hour strike and protest rallies in less than four months.

But at the rallies they were offered no perspective by union officials except to keep appealing to right-wing Premier David Crisafulli for an unspecified deal or accept arbitration, which will prohibit any further industrial action on their fight against low pay and intolerable conditions.

This is the first time since 1997 that two stoppages have been held, highlighting the severity of the crisis facing teachers, as well as the mounting difficulty that the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) bureaucrats are having in containing the anger and concerns of educators.

At the strike rally in Brisbane, the state capital, QTU leaders told the 2,000 teachers who joined the event that the strike could have been avoided if only Crisafulli had picked up the phone.

For weeks, the union bureaucrats had pleaded for an agreement from him for a below-inflation 3 percent interim pay rise and a narrowing of issues to be determined by arbitration in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC).

The Liberal National Party (LNP) government has dismissed these pleas, however. Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek told the media that the government was keen to begin the arbitration process, and the strike would make no difference.

QTU officials are trying to prevent debate and suppress opposition by teachers to their repeated efforts to impose another sellout agreement with the state government, just like those under the previous state Labor government from 2015 to 2024, that will do nothing to address the poor wages and onerous workloads, and the resulting severe staff shortages.

QTU general secretary Kate Ruttiman opened the Brisbane rally by anti-democratically declaring the leadership's intention to move three resolutions without debate. She abruptly stated that "these are statewide resolutions—they cannot be amended, they cannot be debated, we're going to

move them."

Ruttiman claimed this was necessary to "make sure that this government knows we are united in this fight." In reality, the resolutions were designed to restrict teachers' demands within the scope of what both the government and QTU leaders deem acceptable.

In summary, the resolutions condemned the state government for "failing to make an acceptable offer," again asked Crisafulli to "intervene in negotiations" and said the QTU campaign would continue into 2026. Resolution 3 stated that "members strongly support an ongoing campaign throughout the remainder of 2025 and 2026 including further rallies across Queensland... to ensure our campaign... continues to be visible to each other and our community."

There was no acknowledgement that teachers voted for a "series of 24-hour strikes" at mass rallies during the first strike on August 6, only to have the QTU delay further action. That was despite the government's refusal to budge from its initial offer of an 8 percent nominal pay rise over three years—well below the latest official inflation statistics, which show the consumer price index (CPI) resurging in October to 3.8 percent over the past year.

Nor was there any mention of the fact that last month teachers voted by nearly 68 percent in a ballot to reject the government's "best and final" offer, which the QTU leadership had endorsed in an October 27 "campaign update," falsely describing the deal as an "improved offer."

Moreover, the government is still refusing to release the Comprehensive Review of School Resourcing (CRoSR), which was promised by the previous state Labor government in 2022, as part of the last enterprise agreement, to address the workloads, poor conditions and staff shortages.

Ruttiman told the rally: "If we end up in arbitration, but the government fails to make an offer that we can recommend to you, then the reality is, we will need to keep turning out and putting up the fight." Likewise, QTU president Cresta Richardson claimed, "arbitration will not deter us; arbitration will not end our campaign."

The union knows full well that QIRT arbitration, which

takes effect compulsorily from December 31, renders all further industrial action illegal. From past experience, that arbitration could drag on for two years.

Similar discontent with pay and conditions is brewing among teachers nationally, including stoppages and protests in Tasmania and Victoria. But the QTU and other teacher unions, all affiliated to the Australian Education Union (AEU), are trying to keep the struggles isolated to individual states.

The union bureaucrats want to avoid a conflict with the federal Labor government, which is continuing to systematically underfund public schools, while pouring billions of dollars into AUKUS and other preparations for war.

At the Brisbane rally, **Heidi**, a primary school teacher, told the WSWS she was concerned about safety and overwork. “We need drastic change in schools,” she said, speaking about a pregnant colleague who had been hit in the belly.

Asked about unpaid work and increased workload, Heidi said: “We’ve got to be psychologists in the classroom... dealing with parent emails and their requests... as a result we can’t get through the curriculum requirements, there just aren’t enough hours in the day.”

Alluding to the underlying problems, she said: “I think it’s societal... I think there needs to be more funding in state education... we need to look at how much funding is going into the private sector... there needs to be a completely different system.”

Concerning the threat of arbitration, Heidi said the QTU had previously warned that “we could lose so much... it’s not what we want.”

Sandy, another primary school teacher, had similar concerns. “My biggest concern is actually the unsafe work environment, that in the past two to three years I’ve been kicked, punched, spat at, sworn at. I get sworn at daily.”

On teachers’ workloads, she added: “I go to work from 8:20 a.m. until 5 p.m. every day, I then come home and work another two to three hours, four nights a week and on a Sunday I’ll do five hours of planning to get ready for the week. That’s extreme workload.”

As a special needs teacher, Sandy said the worsening teacher shortage was particularly alarming. “Because the teacher shortage is so bad, when we need a relief teacher... they put me on a class. My special needs students, who I usually support every day, I’m not able to support because I’m in a classroom.”

Sandy said she took work home. She spent “at least two to three hours every night planning, making resources. Now, the reason that we have to constantly make new resources is because they’re constantly changing the curriculum. So we’re reinventing the wheel.”

In pleading for a deal with the government, the QTU bureaucrats have refused to specify any demands on salaries or conditions. In their negotiations for a new agreement with the government, they are adhering to “interest-based bargaining” (IBB) which junks the previous union process of submitting a log of claims. Instead, it consists of “exploring the common interests” with management and devising means of satisfying those interests at workers’ expense.

This is a corporatist partnership. It takes to a deeper level the enterprise bargaining system that was imposed by the Keating Labor government and the unions during the early 1990s, to split the working class into individual workplaces, ban most industrial action and subordinate workers to the profit demands of “their” employers.

The IBB process is another stage in the decades-long transformation of the unions into industrial policing agencies, functioning as nothing but instruments for helping to inflict the agenda of the corporate elite on their members.

Educators need to break out of this straitjacket and democratically formulate and fight for demands based on their interests and those of their students. That means developing new forms of working-class organisation—rank-and-file committees—that will take up the fight for workers’ rights, against the assault on workplace and living conditions and the preparations for war.

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the educators’ rank-and-file network, urges teachers to set up their own school committees, independent of the Labor and trade union machine. Across the working class, these committees can initiate a political fight against the subordination of all human needs, including education, to the profit demands of big business. To discuss forming rank-and-file committees, contact the CFPE:

#### Contact the CFPE:

Email: cfpe.aus@gmail.com

Facebook: facebook.com/commforpubliceducation

Twitter: CFPE\_Australia



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