

Reject the Australian Education Union sellout in Tasmania, unify with educators in Victoria, form rank-and file committees!

Committee for Public Education

7 April 2026

The Committee for Public Education urges all public school teachers and workers in Tasmania to reject the offer published last Thursday by the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the state Liberal government.

Make no mistake: By calling off its work bans the AEU is signalling its willingness to force this offer through. The union officials are preparing a massive sellout that does nothing to address the enormous crisis wracking public education.

Over the past year, Tasmanian teachers have staged repeated stoppages, including rolling regional strikes, half day actions and, just late last month, a series of full day walkouts, expressing anger at decades of cuts, crushing workloads and real wage erosion.

The latest walkouts in Tasmania coincided with a statewide strike by Victorian teachers which directly poses the need for unified action across the two states and nationally. But the AEU has repeatedly acted to limit, isolate and channel the unrest into narrow, staged actions and closed door negotiations that prepare sellouts rather than a genuine fight.

The Tasmanian AEU's readiness to accede to the Liberal government's demands is a sharp warning to Victorian teachers that the AEU in Victoria is preparing a similar sellout, tied hand and foot as the AEU apparatus is to state and federal Labor governments.

Having let teachers blow off steam, the AEU is now working to shut down any escalation of industrial action amid rising unrest and opposition. Overseen by both Labor and Liberal governments, at federal and state level, and enforced by the union bureaucracy, the decades-long assault on the public education system is being deepened.

Tasmanian teachers are being offered a wage increase of just 3 percent annually over the next two years and 2.75 percent in the third year with top-ups of between \$250 and \$500 to base salaries. This amounts to a substantial real wage cut when inflation is soaring, driven by the criminal

US-Israeli assault on Iran. The one-off top-ups are a drop in the ocean relative to the decade-long erosion of educators' living standards and broader assaults on public education.

The official inflation rate is already 3.7 percent, but this underestimates the real cost of living pressures confronting working people. For example, housing costs are up at 7.2 percent in February, while the cost of electricity rose by 32.2 percent last year. These figures do not even include the impact of the criminal war. Sky-rocketing prices for petrol and diesel are starting to affect the costs of everything, including food, construction and all transported goods.

Worried by the size and scale of the turnout by teachers in the last week of March, the AEU is working behind the scenes to secure a deal acceptable to Liberal Premier Jeremy Rockliff's government as soon as possible. As one teacher commented in disbelief on Facebook: "Just looked at the new government offer April 2nd. Thought the date was wrong. We went on strike for this? Incredibly disappointed the union thinks this is even worthy of consideration."

Public sector unions in Tasmania have been negotiating such sellouts with the state government. AEU state president David Genford said the AEU would be happy to settle for a similar deal. Interviewed by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, he said: "All we're asking for is something fair that we can take to our members." This makes a mockery of the union's nominal claim of 21.55 percent over three years, starting with 11 percent in the first year.

Regarding workloads, the offer will do nothing to resolve longstanding workload issues and staff shortages, a key issue for teachers across Australia. A token increase in pupil-free time and the reductions in after-school meeting time hours will not lessen the hours of unpaid overtime the average teacher works. The offer does not include enforceable staffing ratios, funded class size limits or mandatory additional classroom assistants.

Tasmanian public schools have the second worst staff shortages in Australia, with the AEU reporting that 82

percent of schools in the state face critical staff shortages. Staff shortages lead to high levels of stress and burnout for other staff and increased workloads, with 83 percent of teacher respondents saying they have taught split or merged classes.

The government's offer merely outlines that full-time teachers will receive an additional half an hour a week planning time, rising to 40 minutes a week next year. The union has boasted of the proposed meeting caps, to be phased in over three years. But these measures are to be implemented by local agreements, opening the way for staff being pressured to "agree" to more onerous arrangements.

Likewise, the promise to employ seven more school psychologists to service 185 public schools with approximately 57,000 students is far from the mass hiring and permanent resourcing levels educators need to reduce workloads and ensure safety, and the same goes for a proposal to have just over 8 full-time equivalent staff to implement a Violence in Schools action plan.

These are major issues for educators. Data from Tasmania's Department for Education, Children and Young People in 2024 showed that more than 2,000 students waited a year or more to receive diagnosis and treatment from a school psychologist. Another 1,000 students waited a year to see a social or other allied health professional.

An AEU State of our Schools survey noted: "The impact that increased student complexity and student behaviour is having on teachers was noticeable, demonstrating that student needs are more complex than ever and schools lack the resources, classroom assistance and wellbeing and behavioural supports needed to address it effectively."

The AEU's role must be recognised for what it is. Far from being defenders of teachers, union leaders have been integrated into the ruling establishment. The AEU leadership has been complicit in the driving down of conditions and wages of educators for years. Across Australia, union bureaucracies have subordinated members' struggles to negotiations with state governments, limiting action to token stoppages and then bargaining away workers' demands in secret.

While governments claim there is no money for pay rises or to address staffing shortages, billions of dollars are being channelled into preparations for war, including through the AUKUS agreement. The US-led war against Iran has exposed the entire political establishment in Australia as supporters and participants in an illegal war that threatens to plunge the world into World War III. Regardless of whether Liberal or Labor are in office, capitalist governments of every ilk are committed to corporate profit and war over social need.

The same issues confront educators nationally and

internationally. In Victoria, teachers took strike action for the first time in more than a decade last month, closing more than 500 schools. The response of the AEU was to immediately engage in backroom talks with the state Labor government, working to dissipate, split and divide the growing opposition of educators nationally. In Queensland last year teachers voted overwhelmingly to reject a union-endorsed offer but the AEU-affiliated Queensland Teachers Union accepted the state Liberal government placing the dispute in the hands of an arbitration court.

Teachers, education support staff, students and families need to form rank-and-file committees (RFCs), independent of the union apparatuses, to help develop the widest movement against the entire political establishment. Educators must immediately unify with teachers in Victoria and Queensland establishing a network of committees. Such committees are essential to turn out to other sections of the working class confronting similar attacks and fight for the basic social right for every child to receive the highest quality, free public education and for every educator to receive decent wages, conditions and resources to be able to do their job properly.

This program is incompatible with an education system subordinated to the capitalist market, the dictates of big business and the war agenda. Labor, Liberal and the other parliamentary parties all serve the interests of the major corporations and the ultra-wealthy. Educators and other workers need to turn to a socialist and internationalist perspective based on the social needs of the vast majority, rather than the narrow interests of the wealthy few.

To discuss these issues and how to form rank-and-file committees, contact the Committee for Public Education (CFPE) the rank-and-file educators' network:

Email: cfpe.aus@gmail.com

Facebook: facebook.com/commforpubliceducation

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



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