

Educators in US and UK support fight against Australian Education Union sellout

Committee for Public Education

11 June 2026

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the educators' rank-and-file network, urges all educators and workers to join its online national public meeting this Sunday, June 14 at 11 a.m. to discuss how to develop and broaden the fight against the sellout deal between the Australian Education Union and the Victorian state Labor government, and the underlying austerity and war agenda of the federal Labor government. Click here to register.

Educators in the United States and Britain have sent messages of solidarity to teachers and Education Support staff in the Australian state of Victoria who are confronting a proposed sellout agreement struck between the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the state Labor government.

The AEU-Labor deal, announced after backroom negotiations with Premier Jacinta Allan's government, would provide no class size caps or relief from chronic staff shortages and crushing workloads, and strip educators of the right to strike until 2030.

It would also impose meagre nominal pay rises of 6 to 7 percent a year in the face of the global impact of the criminal US-Israeli war on Iran, Lebanon and Gaza on fuel and food prices, intensifying the 10 percent real wage cut imposed since the last AEU-Labor deal in 2022.

The AEU is trying to ram a ratification through its membership via an anti-democratic process in which individual members' votes are not even counted—a single delegate casts votes for every 20 financial members after a school sub-branch meeting, with no independent scrutiny.

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE) is calling for a No vote and the building of rank-and-file committees, independent of the AEU apparatus, to take forward the struggle for decent wages and conditions and unite with workers and educators globally through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees against austerity, war and the capitalist system itself.

Jesse, a middle school arts teacher in New York City

As a New York City public school teacher, I stand fully behind the CFPE's call for a No vote and rank-and-file committees. We face the same fight here. The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) bureaucracy has repeatedly cut deals with Democratic administrations delivering below-inflation pay, unbearable workloads and no-strike clauses. Our pseudo-left Mayor Mamdani—elected on promises to tax the rich—scabbed on the Long Island Railroad commuter rail strike last month, colluding with the state government, and endorsed the strikebreaking Governor Hochul who imported scab nurses during the nurses' strikes. Mamdani has just secured a two-year delay of the class size law, pushing compliance to 2029–30. This marks a devastating blow to already struggling school districts in the city, particularly in the poorest neighbourhoods where need is the highest. His budget slashed new teacher hiring from 6,000 to 1,000. This

manoeuvre was worked out hand-in-hand with the UFT. The only way forward is to break from the union apparatus and build independent rank-and-file committees through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Our struggles are international, and so must be our organization. Vote No. Build rank-and-file committees.

Renaë, a public high school history teacher in California

To educators in Victoria: As a public high school teacher in southern California, I have been following your struggle closely, and the connections are impossible to ignore. We have just lived through a major betrayal here, and we are still counting the damage.

This past school year, the California Teachers Association ran what it called the "We Can't Wait" campaign throughout California. It was framed as a unified statewide push, but it functioned in practice to isolate nearly 80,000 teachers district by district, cutting off any possibility of coordinated statewide action and forcing through contracts that failed to meet inflation and addressed nothing fundamental on class sizes or resources.

Within weeks of ratification, districts announced mass cuts. Los Angeles Unified issued more than a thousand layoff notices and in San Diego Unified, dozens of layoffs were issued to bus drivers, custodians, special education aides and cafeteria workers. West Contra Costa Unified approved \$42 million in cuts including a 10 percent staffing reduction and school closures. In San Francisco Unified, \$114 million in cuts including hundreds of forced retirements and central office layoffs were already being carried out, with another \$59 million required for the coming year. In my own district, substitute teacher pay has been quietly slashed by \$35 a day, with zero response from any union.

They tell us to accept less for our students, for ourselves, for our communities, while public education, healthcare and every basic social right are systematically dismantled. The same attack is being carried out in every country, by the same class of people, through the same instruments. That is precisely why the answer cannot be a state-by-state or district-by-district fight managed by union bureaucracies whose function is to keep struggles isolated and contained.

Educators across Australia need to unite and link that fight to teachers and workers internationally who are confronting the same austerity, the same lies, and the same betrayals. Do not let them do this to you. Vote no! Demand full transparency and rank-and-file oversight of the vote. Build independent rank-and-file committees in every school, connect them across the country and internationally. The union apparatus will not lead this fight, it exists now to prevent it.

Sophie, a special needs teacher from Yorkshire

We face almost identical battles to you in Australia. We too have a Labour government which is hellbent on subordinating the right to education and social programmes to increased military funding. We are also confronted with a three-year wage deal of 6.5 percent. This is to block us from taking strike action for the next three years. Labour's proposals are in response to a growing militancy amongst teachers who have lost 20 percent of their income since 2010.

Our pay deal will be linked to productivity and further cuts to an education system already facing a recruitment crisis, crumbling buildings, lack of SEND (special needs) places and with schools forced to provide social and food provision to deal with a child poverty crisis. Teacher workload and burnout has seen new teachers entering the profession at the lowest level since records began 30 years ago. And our class sizes are the highest in Europe, with over a million pupils taught in classes of 31 or more.

The education unions are led by former members of the pseudo-left organisations, who hold most of the executive positions in the largest union, the NEU (National Education Union). Whilst declaring opposition, they offer no plan to fight back other than to demand the government change course. We have repeatedly voiced our opposition through union ballots which are not acted on or left for months to wear teachers down.

A successful struggle cannot be carried if trade union bureaucrats remain in control. Teachers must actively build rank-and-file committees and unify educators with workers both in Australia and internationally.

Tim, a secondary humanities teacher from Cambridge, England

I strongly support a No vote on this rotten deal. The unions are working for their own means, not for those of the rank-and-file educators. In Britain, the unions have repeatedly sold out their members. I work in a Multi Academy Trust (MAT), which are independent organisations that run groups of schools as a for-profit business.

As businesses, MATs set their own agendas. Teachers are told what to teach, when to teach and how to teach. Even the books that pupils are allowed to access in their school libraries have been carefully controlled. The curriculum has been reduced, with arts programmes being cut, and each MAT provides selected curriculum packages that are ready to go so that anyone can pick it up and deliver it to a class. This is a deliberate way of ensuring cheaper labour and cutting experienced staff.

On top of this, workload continues to escalate with teachers leaving the profession in droves citing "excessive workload." There is just not enough time in the day to ensure that all preparation, planning and marking is completed, with teachers using their evenings and weekends to cover the shortfall.

In 2023 teachers took what was the most significant series of strikes in decades, yet the outcome ended with a pay deal that would be partially funded by school budgets that are already scraped to the bone.

The unions pushed the line that if workers could pause their struggle and wait, a new Labour government would reverse the decline of education. This has been exposed as a lie. The British Labour government has doubled down on the austerity agenda. Yet there is money for war.

Workers must make a stand to set up their own rank-and-file committees independent of the unions to achieve actual gains and fight back against years of cuts to education funding and attacks on social programmes. This is a fight for all educators internationally!

Statement of Solidarity from Khara, a high school maths teacher, and Phyllis, an elementary public school retiree, Detroit

We send you urgent solidarity from Detroit, Michigan—a city whose educators know all too well what it means to have a union bureaucracy work against you.

In August 2023, the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) rammed through a sellout contract at the very start of the school year. The leadership gave us no genuine strike vote, held an online meeting where questions were shut down and no chat function was permitted, and then released the contract text with barely 48 hours to review it. The ballot itself was rigged—it offered no option to strike, only a thinly veiled threat: Accept this deal or receive nothing at all. The result? A contract that accepted \$300 million in budget cuts, the elimination of over 300 positions, including paraprofessionals and contracted nurses, and below-inflation pay raises.

When the DFT announced "ratification," the numbers told the real story: At most, 26 percent of the membership had voted yes. The vast majority either voted no or refused to participate—a vote of no confidence in the entire apparatus.

Reading about what you are facing in Victoria, we felt an immediate and painful recognition. The AEU negotiating in secret. "Inflation-busting pay rises" that are real pay cuts. An anti-democratic ratification process designed to guarantee a yes vote while silencing dissent. A four-year no-strike clause that would surrender the most fundamental weapon workers have. This is the same playbook, on the other side of the world.

And we recognize something else too: the role of the pseudo-left organizations who tell workers to stay inside the union apparatus and "pressure" the bureaucracy. We heard the same arguments here. The bureaucracy is not failing out of weakness or timidity. It is structurally tied to the government and to school administrators. It cannot be reformed from within—it must be circumvented by workers organizing independently.

That is why the call of the Committee for Public Education is the right one. Vote No. And build rank-and-file committees in every school—committees that are democratically controlled by teachers and Education Support workers themselves, that share information freely, that can link up with other sections of the working class here in Detroit, in Ontario and internationally, through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

The fight for your wages and conditions is not separate from the broader fight against Labor's austerity and war spending. It is the same fight workers everywhere are waging. We stand with you.

In international solidarity,
Members of the Michigan Educators Rank-and-File Committee



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