

# Australia's educators online meeting exposes AEU suppression of opposition to sellout deal

**Our reporters**  
**15 June 2026**

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the Australian educators rank-and-file network, hosted a strong online public meeting on Sunday, titled: “Vote No to AEU-Labor sellout! Build independent rank-and-file committees! Fund education not war!”

Teachers, Education Support (ES) workers and student teachers spoke out against the intolerable conditions in public schools and the Australian Education Union's (AEU) suppression of opposition to its proposed retrograde four-year agreement with the Victorian state Labor government.

The AEU is seeking to ram through a members' ratification vote this week on the deal, which features real-wage cuts amid the cost-of-living crisis, and would do nothing to address soaring class sizes, workloads and staff shortages. Typically anti-democratic, this is not a one-member-one-vote ballot. Instead, a single delegate—automatically assigned based on the AEU's internal database—will cast votes on behalf of every 20 financial members.

Will Marshall, a longtime teacher, CFPE and Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member, opened Sunday's meeting by placing the fight against the AEU's latest sellout deal in the global context. He outlined rising working-class strikes internationally against the ruling class assault on wages and conditions and the pouring of billions of dollars into military preparations for war, at the expense of public education and other essential social programs.

Marshall pointed out: “The same Labor governments—state and federal—that are demanding wage restraint, larger class sizes, and deeper austerity in our schools are simultaneously backing the US-led war against Iran and preparing for future conflicts.

“So a fight for educators' conditions must become a struggle against the ruling elite and both state and federal Labor governments that are diverting society's resources into militarism, enforcing austerity at home, and relying on the union apparatus to suppress resistance and impose their agenda.”

Delivering the main report to the meeting, CFPE convenor Sue Phillips, also a teacher and SEP member of many years' standing, outlined the AEU-Labor deal and how it was cooked up in closed-door talks after a powerful March 24 statewide strike.

Phillips said the agreement would lock educators into four more years of real pay cuts, with no right to strike, on top of the 10 percent cut since the last AEU sellout in 2022. She laid bare the AEU bureaucracy's claims that the deal contained “workload wins.” Phillips explained: “This is false. There are no caps on class sizes—the central driver of workload, burnout, staff shortages and educational outcomes.”

Phillips exposed the role of pseudo-left fronts like Socialists in Schools that backed a “No” vote but promoted illusions that the AEU and Premier Jacinta Allan's government could be pressured into producing a better deal, despite their total commitment to satisfying the requirements of the corporate elite.

She explained the need for educators to break out of the AEU-Labor straitjacket and form independent rank-and-file committees to take control of the struggle. They would raise demands such as an immediate 40 percent pay increase to recover past losses, with automatic cost-of-living adjustments, maximum class sizes of 15 to 20, a minimum of eight hours weekly during school hours for planning, assessment and collaboration, and “end public funding for elite private schools and invest billions in public education for a free, first-class education for all.”

Phillips concluded: “The defence of public education requires a socialist perspective. The resources exist to provide high-quality schools and decent pay and conditions, but they are monopolised by the billionaires, banks and corporations. These resources must be placed under public ownership and democratic control and redirected to meet social need—not private profit.”

In the many chats, comments and questions that followed, educators gave graphic accounts of the increasingly impossible burdens on teachers and ES staff in dealing with large classes and the growing numbers of students with complex special needs.

One teacher said: “The ES that is working in my class does a phenomenal job for the very low pay that she's receiving. I've got 3 very intensive needs students who need a lot of support for academic, and also their health needs.”

She described how she was quickly banned from the AEU Facebook site after asking basic questions, such as why its deal with the government was reported in the media before teachers were informed, whether the proposed agreement would prevent additional meetings taking place during the school day, and why the nominal pay rise was over four years, not three, as the AEU had promised. When she asked the AEU for an explanation for her banning, she never received one.

Another teacher recounted an AEU “briefing” meeting, where union officials spoke for 50 minutes, leaving only 10 minutes for questions, including about whether ES would have to pay onerous fees to obtain formal qualifications. When the meeting got heated, the officials shut it down, saying it was unfortunate that not all the questions could be answered.

Two teaching students, both members of the SEP and the

International Youth and Students for Social Equality, spoke about the harrowing conditions they experienced during their trainee placements in schools.

One reported that at least half of student teachers doing a two-year Master of Teaching degree dropped out by the end of their course, often after school placements. “Students only get a brief glimpse, but it’s often enough and it’s highly stressful.”

He said teachers’ workplace conditions have been eroded over decades by governments in partnership with the union bureaucracies that enforced this attack, “hand-in-hand with Labor in the interests of Australian capitalism.”

A CFPE member exposed the line being pushed by Socialists in Schools that if teachers were a bit more militant, they would get a supposedly better deal like the one in the neighbouring state of New South Wales (NSW). She recounted how NSW teachers had held three one-day strikes in 2021 and 2003, only to be told by the union to back the election of a state Labor government.

The subsequent October 2023 agreement with the Minns state Labor government resulted in an initial nominal pay rise of around 8 percent, which did not make up for the prior losses, and was followed by sub-inflationary annual rises of 3 percent for the next three years, with nothing to reduce workloads.

International contributions highlighted the universal experience of union betrayals. The meeting heard part of one of the greetings of support for the meeting. Renae, a public high school teacher in California wrote that during the past school year, the California Teachers Association ran a “We Can’t Wait” campaign, framing it as a unified statewide push, only to force through contracts that failed to meet inflation and addressed nothing fundamental on class sizes or resources.

Tom Peters, a writer for the *World Socialist Web Site* and a member of the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand, recounted that last October, more than 100,000 workers, including public school teachers, had joined a one-day nationwide strike, the largest in nearly 50 years, against pay cuts.

But the teacher unions then rammed through sellout agreements that featured two years of pay increases of just 2.5 and 2.1 percent, well below inflation, despite an initial resounding “No” vote by primary school teachers. In April this year, seeing no alternative, they narrowly voted “Yes” to essentially the same deal presented by the primary teachers union.

In the chat, a teacher asked: “What would be the process to get rid of the AEU leadership and elect genuine members who have interests of the membership as a priority?”

In response, Mike Head, a WSWS correspondent and member of the Western Sydney University Rank-and-File Committee, began by explaining that university workers faced the same kinds of deteriorating conditions and bureaucratic trade union collaboration with management and governments.

That included not only the elimination of 4,000 jobs nationally over the past two years but the restructuring of both research and teaching to align with the Albanese Labor government’s corporate and military-aligned national priorities, including the AUKUS pact. The campus unions had vehemently opposed calls for unified action against this historic assault.

“There is no means of breaking through this pro-government

union apparatus without the development of alternative forms of organisation,” Head said. “That is what we mean by rank-and-file committees, completely independent of the union apparatuses.” He urged everyone to get involved with the CFPE. “We can discuss how to develop rank-and-file committees at your workplace.”

Cheryl Crisp, the SEP national secretary, concluded the discussion by warning that the ruling class, not just in Australia, but internationally, was seeking to overturn all the gains of the working class during the 20th century, such as public education, public health systems, welfare and basic services like the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

This was bound up with war after war by US imperialism, now in Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon and Iran, to try to reassert global hegemony, and the threat of a catastrophic nuclear war. Crisp urged the participants to draw serious historic lessons from the discussion at the meeting.

“Join and develop new organisations, create rank-and-file committees, which include non-union members, as well as union members, and support staff, in which you can come together and speak openly and honestly, and fight to unite these struggles with other sections of workers, here and internationally.

#### **Contact the CFPE:**

Email: [cfpe.aus@gmail.com](mailto:cfpe.aus@gmail.com)

Facebook: [facebook.com/commforpubliceducation](https://facebook.com/commforpubliceducation)

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

Facebook: [facebook.com/groups/opposeaeusellout](https://facebook.com/groups/opposeaeusellout)



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**