# Australia: Queensland teachers face longer freeze on pay and conditions

**Our correspondent**
**4 August 2026**

In recent weeks, public school teachers and education support staff in Victoria have twice rejected Australian Education Union (AEU) sellout deals on wages and conditions with the state Labor government, throwing the trade union and Labor leaders into a political crisis.

Yet, despite two widely supported 24-hour strikes last August and November, their colleagues in Queensland remain straitjacketed in an arbitration system, facing a more than two-year pay freeze and no relief from intolerable workloads and conditions until 2027 at the earliest.

As in Victoria, teachers in Queensland held statewide strikes for the first time in many years, after repeated below-inflation wage rises, growing work burdens, oversized classes, burnout, inadequate resources and worsening staffing shortages.

Last year's stoppages—the first in 16 years—saw tens of thousands of teachers and their supporters participate in rallies and marches across Queensland, voicing their determination to fight the increasingly intolerable conditions.

Teachers voted for a "series of 24-hour strikes" at mass rallies during their first strike on August 6, only to have the AEU-affiliated Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) delay further action. In October, teachers voted by nearly 68 percent in a ballot to reject the government's "best and final" offer, which included an 8 percent nominal pay rise over three years—well below the soaring cost of living.

But after a second stoppage in November, the QTU called off all industrial action. As a result, in December teachers were locked by the state Liberal National Party government, with the acquiescence of the QTU, into arbitration by the government's pro-employer Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRT)—a process that bans all industrial action.

The QIRT is likely to impose deeper real wage cuts and continued poor conditions via a binding ruling after lengthy hearings that will not even commence before this October.

Last week, Premier David Crisafulli's government restated its opposition to even a sub-inflation interim pay rise of 3 percent, for which the QTU will formally apply to the QIRT in a hearing on August 24. Teachers have had no pay increase since July 2024, despite a severe cost-of-living crisis, which has been intensified by the criminal US-Israel war on Iran.

Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek defended the decision by declaring that the government had warned teachers that rejecting the government's offers last year would inevitably freeze and delay wage increases.

The QTU leadership labelled the government's opposition "shameful and obtuse," saying that other state public service workers had received a baseline 3 percent raise while teachers had gone two years without any cost-of-living salary adjustment.

That 3 percent increase itself, however, would leave teachers, together with the other public sector workers, far behind the official inflation rate, which has ranged from 3.8 percent to 4 percent over the past 12 months, without taking into account rising home mortgage payments.

And the last nominal increase in 2024 left teachers at least 6.5 percent behind inflation after an earlier 18-month pay freeze by the previous state Labor government when the COVID pandemic first broke out.

The government has refused to release a Comprehensive Review of School Resourcing (CRoSR) report that was promised by that state Labor government in 2022, as part of the last agreement, to address the workloads, poor conditions and staff

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shortages.

These conditions are also the result of previous arbitration processes that the QTU inflicted on teachers under Labor and LNP governments in 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2006.

Discontent is mounting among teachers. That was partially expressed in a QTU survey, published in June, which reported that of the 9,000 QTU members who participated, 75 percent said the current workloads negatively affected staff and students, and 72 percent said they were considering quitting.

These results exceed previous QTU-sponsored surveys, dating back to 2018, which also documented overwhelming workloads. In those surveys, one-third of participants said they regularly contemplated leaving the profession due to health degradation caused by overwork.

Workloads have risen partly due to higher numbers of students with complex needs. That burden will further increase dramatically as a result of the federal Labor government cutting $38 billion from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) over the next four years. Tens of thousands of children on the autism spectrum or with other diagnosed learning difficulties will be stripped of basic support programs and pushed into already under-resourced schools.

The latest QTU survey also reported that 70 percent of respondents experienced an incident involving serious risk of injury, actual injury, assault or significant threat in their workplace. The response of the QTU bureaucrats has been to ask the state government to introduce tougher criminal laws to supposedly protect teachers.

What is happening in Queensland is an indictment of the role of the AEU apparatus and its state affiliates, such as the QTU. Similar dissatisfaction with pay and conditions has erupted among teachers nationally this year, including stoppages and protests in Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. But the QTU and other teacher unions, all affiliated to the AEU, have kept the struggles isolated to individual states and territories.

The union bureaucrats want to prevent a confrontation by educators with the federal Labor government, which is systematically underfunding public schools, while pouring billions of dollars into AUKUS and other preparations for a US-led war against China.

The Albanese government's May 12 budget continued to cut overall spending on public schools in real terms. It also announced several major spending cuts, including for Student Engagement and Wellbeing programs and disability support services, despite planning to cut so many children off the NDIS.

Educators in Queensland, Victoria and nationally need to break out of this Labor-union straitjacket and democratically formulate and fight for demands based on their interests and those of their students, not the dictates of governments, the financial markets and the rest of the ruling capitalist class.

That means building new forms of working-class organisation—rank-and-file committees, completely independent of the trade unions—that will take up the necessary unified fight for first-class public education, against the assault on workplace and living conditions and the preparations for war.

To discuss forming 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
Facebook: facebook.com/groups/opposeaeusellout

*On August 16, the Socialist Equality Party, together with the CFPE and the Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee, will hold an online public meeting to discuss the socialist perspective needed to oppose Labor's assault on the NDIS and the broader offensive against the working class. We urge educators, all workers, young people, NDIS participants and their families to register and join this critical discussion.*

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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