

Australia: Vote No in the all-staff ballot!

Build the Victorian Educators Rank-and-File Committee!

Committee for Public Education
24 August 2026

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE) urges all Victorian public school teachers and education support (ES) staff—union and non-union members alike—to vote No in the all-staff ballot on the latest third version of the sellout agreement struck between the state Labor government and the Australian Education Union (AEU).

The 79 percent Yes vote in the AEU’s ballot of its members is not an endorsement but the product of a calculated operation by the union apparatus to wear down, isolate and intimidate teachers. Educators opposed the first two versions of this same deal through two mass strikes—the first in decades, winning widespread public support—and two unprecedented votes against the AEU sellout.

As part of our call, we urge teachers and ES staff who unenthusiastically voted Yes in the AEU ballot, seeing no way forward in the AEU regime, to vote No in the all-staff ballot as the nature of the betrayal becomes clearer. To all educators, we say contact the CFPE and the newly-established Victorian Educators Rank-and-File Committee to discuss how to fight the sellout.

This Mark 3 version of the four-year AEU-government deal is the same as the first two, with only cosmetic changes. It will do nothing to relieve the intolerable working conditions: crushing workloads, ballooning class sizes, excessive face-to-face teaching hours and chronic understaffing.

The supposed “protection of face-to-face hours” embeds the same hours—18.5 for secondary, 21 for primary—creating stress and burnout, with thousands leaving the profession. “Halved meetings”—the one-meeting-per-week reduction—is meaningless when teachers work 50–60 hour weeks.

These conditions will worsen disastrously for teachers and ES staff as a result of the federal Albanese Labor government’s gutting of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which will dump thousands of additional children with complex needs into public schools without funding or specialist resources.

The AEU falsely claimed that the revised deal provided “funded release time” for staff undertaking time-consuming Disability Inclusion Profile work. The agreement merely

requires schools to recognise “the time required by employees for participation in the Disability Inclusion Profile process” as part of long-term planning. It specifies no number of hours nor a guaranteed release entitlement, and no requirement for replacement staff or dedicated funding.

Via a “No Further Claims” no-strike clause, the AEU-Labor agreement locks in these conditions for four years precisely as educators are placed on the frontline of Labor’s NDIS assault.

The headline pay figure—28 to 32 percent over four years—remains a further real wage cut under conditions of soaring mortgage payments, rents and prices, fuelled by the Trump administration’s criminal war on Iran. Labor’s \$2,000 sign-on “sweetener” is a one-off bribe—about two months of groceries for a family—that does nothing to reverse the roughly 10 percent real wage loss since the last AEU sellout in 2022.

Applying the same 28–32 percent to ES wages as low as \$60,000 entrenches poverty pay and perpetuates a two-tier workforce.

A vague promise by newly-installed Premier Ben Carroll to finally stop short-changing Victorian schools by \$2.4 billion over three years under the so-called Gonski plan will do nothing to improve the conditions. Even if that promise were kept, the experience of educators across the country is that the Gonski measures have failed to halt the under-funding, staff shortages and workloads.

Since their first one-day strike on March 24, educators have faced scare tactics, censorship, anti-democratic AEU ballot procedures, and pressure from every arm of the political establishment—the government, the media and, above all, the union. The AEU’s message was blunt: accept this deal or face something worse, either under Labor or a Liberal–One Nation government.

That 21 percent of AEU members still voted no is a powerful indicator of the opposition that persists. But what is needed is new forms of working-class organisation—genuine rank-and-file committees—and an opposed political perspective.

The CFPE advanced that perspective from the start. In our March 17 statement, “Victorian educators at a crossroads,” we warned the AEU bureaucracy could not be pressured to fight,

that its record was one of continuous betrayal, and that teachers had to form rank-and-file committees, totally independent of the apparatus.

We warned that the AEU's log of claims was a ruse, and that backroom secret negotiations would produce a sellout, imposed through anti-democratic methods and repackaged if rejected. We warned that the entire process was designed to exhaust opposition and impose the same basic deal.

The two strikes and No votes—the first rejections of an AEU-endorsed agreement in over 40 years—expressed a rebellion that could spread to other sections of the working class, including educators in other states, public health and local council workers, who are all experiencing historic and deepening cuts to real wages, living standards and social conditions under the Albanese government.

That is why the Carroll government, in consultation with the Albanese government, and in partnership with the AEU, is desperate to end the educators' revolt. The Albanese government's cutting of 300,000 participants off the NDIS is the spearhead of a wider agenda of slashing social programs to pour billions more dollars into AUKUS and other preparations for more catastrophic US-led wars.

In the leadup to the November state election, it is this offensive against the working class that is opening the door for a possible coalition government in Victoria between the Liberals and the far-right One Nation to exploit and divert the social discontent in reactionary anti-immigrant and nationalist directions.

Far from Labor being a "lesser evil," its record, including its own scapegoating of immigrants, is one of paving the way for the far-right.

The response by two pseudo-left groups to the AEU ballot results is politically revealing. Both falsely claim that educators have won gains in the latest deal and even democratised the AEU in the process! They function as the last line of defence for the Labor and union bureaucracy.

Socialists in Schools—Socialist Alternative's front group—even posted a statement urging teachers to celebrate, claiming "we won a better deal" and "a more active and democratic union." The truth is that the AEU repeatedly resorted to anti-democratic methods, as it has for decades—rushed ballots, suppressed debate, misinformation and censorship—to wear down opposition to this latest deal.

Aware of widespread disaffection, which led to wholesale resignations from the AEU after the last betrayal in 2002, Socialists in Schools urged teachers to "convince people to stay in the union and build it." Its central concern is that educators remain trapped inside the same bureaucratic apparatus that just sold them out.

Fight the Crisis—Solidarity's front group—performed the same function by also "celebrating" an "improved offer," while formally recommending a No vote. It called for "building rank and file union power." That is a misleading label for a faction it

hopes will gain office within the AEU.

Both groups vehemently oppose the establishment of genuinely independent rank-and-file committees in schools and workplaces to take the power out of the hands of the union bureaucrats. Their aspiration is to join the bureaucracy itself, which is tied hand and foot to the Labor governments, the anti-strike Fair Work laws and apparatus and the underlying capitalist profit system.

Teachers and ES staff cannot win if they remain straitjacketed within the AEU framework. They need to build their own organisations in every school, democratically controlled by educators, uniting union and non-union workers.

Linking up with the Victorian Educators Rank-and-File Committee, these committees will reach out to other sections of the working class confronting similar assaults: health workers, nurses, doctors, public sector employees.

These committees will circulate information and formulate demands based on the needs of educators and students, not on government and corporate claims of "affordability." We have proposed initial demands, such as:

- An immediate 40 percent wage increase to recover the 10 percent real wage loss since 2021, with salaries indexed to inflation.
- Maximum class sizes of 15–20 students, with enforceable caps.
- A minimum of eight hours per week of guaranteed in school planning, assessment and collaboration time.
- Fully fund support for students with disabilities. Employ thousands of psychologists, health professionals and ES staff.
- Redirect billions from military expansion into public education, end subsidies for elite private schools, and guarantee free high quality public education for every child.

These demands raise the need for a socialist perspective. The resources exist for a world-class public education system, but they are monopolised by billionaires and funnelled into war. They must be placed under public ownership and democratic workers' control and redirected to social need.

To discuss these issues and for assistance in forming rank-and-file committees, contact the CFPE:

Email: cfpe.aus@gmail.com

Facebook: facebook.com/commforpubliceducation

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

Facebook: facebook.com/groups/opposeaeusellout



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact