

# NewsExtra

29 July 2024

## NSW Independent Schools Professional and Operational Staff – Time for a Better Offer

Bargaining has commenced for new multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) for teachers and for professional, administrative and operational staff in NSW and ACT independent schools.

We presented [our claims](#) for improved pay and conditions to the independent schools' bargaining representative, the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AIS), in late May 2024. The AIS responded to our claims on 27 June 2024. We have had several bargaining meetings, most recently on 24 July 2024.

We have agreed in-principle to MEAs with a three-year term, provided the salary increases and conditions meet our expectations.

### AIS said 'No' to improving your working conditions

The response from the AIS on 27 June rejected all our claims for improvements to your conditions including:

- **Long Service Leave:** the AIS rejected our request to increase your long service leave to be more in line with teachers, stating that at 1.05 weeks per year of service, your entitlement, still exceeds the statutory minimum.
- **Personal/Carers Leave:** the AIS rejected our claim to increase your paid personal leave to 15 days per year, aligning it with teachers. They want your leave to remain at the national minimum standard of 10 days per year.
- **Special Leave:** the AIS flatly rejected our claim for access to one day of special leave without providing an explanation.
- **Paid Study/Examination Leave:** the AIS denied your access to paid study or examination leave despite the growing number of staff undertaking teacher training.

### No pay offer yet

The AIS has stated they may make a pay offer prior to our next bargaining meeting on 7 August. The AIS has agreed to discuss our claim for improvements in pay rates based on comparisons with rates of pay for similar jobs in other education sectors (for details [see here](#)) but these discussions will take some time. Our claim is for rates to catch up with those applying in other school sectors (including anticipated increases in July 2025) with further pay rises of 4% in February 2026 and February 2027.

### Review of classification structures

Classification structures for professional and operational staff are no longer fit for purpose as it is too hard to reach higher classifications or progress to higher pay rates. This is particularly the case for school assistants (teacher aides), clerical and administrative staff, staff working in children's services (preschools, early learning centres or after school care) and wellbeing staff. The AIS has agreed to review the classifications but is proposing to mirror the descriptors contained in the Modern Award, the baseline industrial instrument, as the basis of new classifications. Additionally, the AIS is proposing a separate and new classification stream for ICT staff.

Our goal is to revise the classification structures to better reflect the work you do, simplify the system, and ensure pay is commensurate with your level of responsibility. We will only agree to a classification structure that achieves this.

## Boarding house staff

The AIS is proposing to review sleepover allowances for boarding house staff and to allow schools to request staff to vacate the premises during the summer pupil vacation period for renovations and general repairs. We have not agreed to this proposal.

## New categories of employees to be covered by the MEA

The AIS is seeking to expand the coverage of the MEA to include sports coaches, instrumental music teachers and professionals such as HR staff. We welcome more discussion around this. If you have colleagues working in these roles, please invite them to [join the IEU](#).

## Work Health and Safety remains a problem in Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)

Work Health and Safety (WHS) risks are significant for staff working in SSPs. The IEU claim includes the introduction of minimum ratios of staff to students, along with improved WHS consultation to manage these risks. The AIS rejected this claim, stating it would be “operationally prohibitive”.

Additionally, we raised the issue of teacher aides in SSPs being required to 'act up' without appropriate compensation when teachers are absent. The AIS is currently considering this claim but has made no commitment.

## Marginal improvements to paid parental leave

In response to our claim, the AIS has agreed to recognise the 14 weeks of paid parental leave as service for leave accruals. However, it is disappointing that this paid leave will not count as service for progression. The AIS is still considering our request for superannuation to be payable on paid parental leave.

On a positive note, we have secured 12 weeks of paid parental leave for the non-initial primary carer (usually the father) who assumes primary carer responsibility within the first 12 months following the birth of their child. This paid leave is in addition to the initial two weeks of paid concurrent leave at the time of the child's birth (or adoption). This leave will be inclusive of all non-term periods, except for the first four weeks immediately following Term 4, which are considered annual leave.

While we have made progress in improving paid parental leave, there is still more work to be done.

## Stand strong with the IEU

We need your support and engagement to fight for better pay and working conditions:

- 1. Stay informed:** stay updated with NewsExtras and follow our campaign, [click here](#).
- 2. Spread the word:** discuss our campaign with your colleagues and encourage non-members to join the IEU. [Click here to join](#). Union members have a say in shaping the MEA and your working conditions.
- 3. Hold a union meeting:** show your solidarity by holding a chapter meeting with your colleagues. Invite your IEU Organiser to the meeting. If you prefer, you may wish to have a meeting with only professional and operational staff (including non-members) to ensure a full focus on these issues.
- 4. Empower your chapter:** union reps now have protections and rights under the new delegates' rights. If you do not have an IEU rep in your school, reach out to your IEU Organiser to find out how reps can be elected for your school and advocate for your chapter.

Together, we can achieve the fair pay and working conditions that you have been waiting for.

