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Christmas win: New deal for independent school teachers and staff

In last-minute talks ahead of a hearing at the Fair Work Commission today, the IEU reached a deal with the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AIS) that includes substantial pay rises and improved conditions in new three-year multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) covering about 30,000 employees in 244 schools across NSW and the ACT.

The Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch, which represents teachers and support staff in non-government schools, has been negotiating with the AIS since May to distil 10 separate agreements into just three new MEAs, one for teachers and two for professional and operational staff (in NSW and the ACT).

“This is an outstanding outcome, driven by thousands of highly engaged union members,” said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. “Over recent years, the salaries of teachers and professional and operational staff have fallen behind those in government and Catholic schools. We are confident all staff will receive pay increases that finally recognise and reward their hard work and dedication to their schools and students.

“And in an historic first step towards greater transparency around workloads in independent schools, there is a new clause to ensure employers clearly communicate expectations around face-to-face teaching hours, extracurricular duties and, for some leadership positions, the amount of release time from teaching,” Matthews said. “The lack of clarity about workload expectations, together with excessive workloads, have long been of great concern to members.”

Key sticking points for teachers resolved today include:

- An improved translocation to a new pay structure: some experienced teachers will receive pay rises of \$12,000 or \$20,000 a year depending on the agreement from which they are translocating. Other teachers will receive increases of up to \$13,000 per annum.
- For the first time, employers must notify teachers of key workload requirements in their school.
- Teachers in schools for specific purposes (which support students with intellectual or physical disabilities) will keep the \$3500-a-year allowance that the AIS had proposed scrapping.

For professional and operational staff, the union has secured pay rises of at least 4% in NSW and 3% in the ACT in 2025, 4.5% in 2026, and 4% in 2027 (for both NSW and the ACT). Depending on classification and translocation arrangements, many staff can expect pay rises greater than these.

The new agreements will be put to members for a formal vote in February 2025 and staff will receive back pay to the first full pay period on or after 1 February 2025. The AIS had initially refused to consider back pay, even though schools had already budgeted for it.

“More than 7000 teachers signed a petition supporting the union’s push to resolve the impasse in negotiations and seek new rights before the Fair Work Commission; however, with the AIS now having addressed key issues, the union has discontinued this,” Matthews said.

“The new agreements are a real testimony to the members who stood together for a better deal, and we thank and congratulate them on this historic win.”

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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 32,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.

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