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Unpaid wages: Union takes Brindabella Christian College to the Fair Work Commission

The union representing staff in non-government schools is taking Brindabella Christian College to the industrial umpire over unpaid wages and superannuation after the school failed to respond to requests for assurances by 4pm today that staff would be paid immediately.

Many staff at the K-12 school in Canberra were not paid on Friday 21 February in keeping with the scheduled pay period, leaving them distressed about paying bills, including rent and mortgages. A letter from the school to staff and parents on Tuesday evening did nothing to allay their fears.

“We’ve been left with no choice but to take Brindabella Christian College to the Fair Work Commission to compel the school to pay its staff in full and on time,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

“We took Brindabella to the FWC last year over unpaid superannuation, now the situation has deteriorated even further.

“It’s unprecedented for a school not to pay their staff, and for the school to be facing such grave financial difficulties has left the staff feeling shocked and anxious,” she said.

The union met with school management on Monday afternoon to seek answers about when wages would be paid as well as emergency assistance for staff unable to pay bills.

At the meeting, representatives of the school were apologetic yet defensive, blaming the media, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), governments (both federal and ACT), and even claiming parents were at fault for late payment of tuition fees.

“Brindabella needs to drop the blame game and pay its staff accurately and on time – it’s that simple,” Matthews said. “This is no way to run a school, especially as it receives millions of dollars of taxpayer funding.”

The union continues to advise members at the school to turn up for work.

The ATO last week launched an action in the Federal Court over an \$8 million tax debt incurred by the school, which includes penalties for not paying super to staff on time. Last week, the ACT government also issued the school with a 14-day show cause notice. The school has also been investigated over a spate of governance and financial breaches.

Brindabella has more than 1200 students and about 140 staff at its two campuses. Tuition fees in 2025 range from \$10,575 a year for K-4 and \$15,400 for Years 9-12.

“The union calls on Brindabella to stop blaming others for its financial mess, which is impacting its entire community, including teachers, support staff, students and parents,” Matthews said.

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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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