

Media Release

9 March 2016

Fewer than 17% of Catholic school staff take part in strike

New figures show that only one in six Catholic school staff participated in recent strike action over a new enterprise agreement concerning wages and work conditions.

Queensland Catholic Education Commission Executive Director Dr Lee-Anne Perry said the fact fewer than 17 per cent of school staff participated in the strike on February 25 showed a widening divide between the views of school staff and their union.

Union and employer representatives met again today (9 March 2016) but are yet to resolve their negotiations.

“The Independent Education Union doesn’t seem motivated to resolve the process. They continue to attempt to escalate things for reasons only they can explain,” Dr Perry said.

“Fewer than 25% of all school staff voted for strike action - and fewer still actually participated in it. This matches the anecdotal evidence we’re receiving from more and more staff that they want a resolution and they want backpay. These new figures show a clear disconnect between the Independent Education Union and school staff.”

Employer attendance figures recorded that about 3,834 school staff participated in the planned strike, while the staff head count at all schools that day was about 23,000.

“I want to assure school staff, parents and the community that Catholic school employers are committed to resolving current bargaining negotiations and we call on the Independent Education Union to heed the actions of its own membership. On any reading of the attendance figures the planned strike was demonstrably unsuccessful for the union,” Dr Perry said.

Dr Perry said negotiations were also being impacted by misinformation in recent union advertisements claiming that employers were not meeting “the community standard of four weeks annual leave to the support staff only permitted to work during the school term”.

“This claim is factually flawed. An employee who works part time for only 39 weeks is entitled to 4 weeks annual leave on a pro-rata basis. This mirrors the community standard as it applies in the overwhelming majority of Australian workplaces,” Dr Perry said.

“Employers have tabled a fair wages increase of 2.5 per cent. We are hoping the union now listens to its members. Employers have also offered to match any increase provided to Queensland’s state school teachers to ensure a level playing field across the state. Late last year State school teachers in Queensland were provided with an equivalent of a 2.5 per cent annual increase.

“The union continues to talk about comparisons with conditions in other states. This is irrelevant. For example, in NSW teachers have conditions which are based on different working hours and different finishing times each year. Last year they finished school on December 18 whereas in Queensland Catholic schools finished on December 4,” Dr Perry said.

Ends

Visit www.eb8.qcec.catholic.edu.au for all details about Enterprise Bargaining 8.

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