

AEU NT Member Bulletin 1/2018

16 March 2018

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Welcome back for 2018

Welcome back to another year! We know it’s been busy as always in classrooms across the Territory. Our union office has been busy with enterprise bargaining for teachers and ATs as well as CDU and Batchelor. We have also continued our focus on recruitment and organising. Membership continues to grow strongly – we have welcomed more than 100 new members including 51 at DoE Teacher Orientation. As we get stronger, so does our bargaining power. Explain to a colleague the benefits of joining – signing up takes just a couple of minutes online at www.aeunt.org.au/membership.

This is our first bulletin of 2018. We use these bulletins as a means of keeping you informed about important issues. We also encourage you to read the Territory Educator, which is published once a term and mailed to every financial member as well as published online. Another good way to keep in touch with union matters is by [liking our Facebook page](#) – be sure to click the on the “see first” button on this page under the “Following” tab so you see all our posts.

Only one week left to register for Branch Conference

Registrations for our annual Branch Conference close next **Friday 23 March**. Following on from the success of last year’s conference in Alice Springs attended by more than 90 members, this year’s conference will shape the future of our union.

With teacher bargaining continuing and a formal offer from the Government likely very soon, the conference will be an important opportunity to discuss the state of play and to consider whether to endorse an offer or consider action to seek improvements. We will also discuss the future of education in the Territory and talk about how we can improve education outcomes for students. Guest speakers include Education Minister Eva Lawler, our Federal President Correna Haythorpe and ACTU National Campaign Co-ordinator Kara Keys. Stay tuned for guest speaker announcements in coming weeks.

The conference will be held at the Hilton Double Tree, Darwin on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 May. Each sub-branch is entitled to elect at least one delegate – costs associated with attending are met by the AEU. [Click here to register](#).

Quality Educator Award – nominate a colleague

Nominations are open for the AEU NT’s Quality Educator Award, an annual award to recognise a member for their outstanding contribution to NT public education. The award is open to all financial members: teachers, principals, assistant teachers, support staff, office-based educators & VET lecturers. The winner will receive a \$1000 JB Hi-Fi voucher generously donated by Fleet Network.

We know you all have a colleague who is doing exceptional work in our schools. Reward their hard work with a nomination for this awesome prize. Download the entry form [from our website](#) or email admin@aeunt.org.au and we'll send you one. Nominations must be received by COB Friday 6 April.

What's happening with permanency?

The AEU office has received a number of queries about the latest developments in offering permanency to classroom teachers. Insecure employment remains a major issue for teachers across the NT – the latest data provided to us shows that nearly 37% of school-based teachers are employed on fixed period contracts. Fixing this problem is one of the major issues we are tackling in enterprise bargaining (see update below).

In the interim, the Department, OCPE and the union have agreed to a process known as the Permanency Project which allows classroom teachers who meet the necessary criteria to be converted to ongoing (permanent) employees. All schools have been contacted this term and asked to participate if they have capacity to absorb fixed period employees on a permanent basis. If you believe you should be eligible and have not been considered, or your school has opted not to participate, we would like to hear from you – contact our office and speak confidentially to one of our officers.

Teacher enterprise bargaining update

We are now seven months into bargaining for a new enterprise agreement (EA) for our teacher and assistant teacher members. Both sides are working on finalising negotiations as quickly as possible with the aim of finalising an offer to be put to employees in May. For the AEU, this means our senior offices will likely be able to explain the detail of a proposed agreement to Delegates at our annual Conference on the May Day weekend.

Our bargaining team will do all it can to achieve improvements for members within the negotiating framework, but the final decision on whether to endorse an offer rests with a democratic process governed by our Branch structure: Conference, Executive, our Regions and Sub-branches.

The without prejudice nature of bargaining means both sides agree not to publicly disclose the details of bargaining. Nonetheless, some developments can be made clear to members without compromising the confidentiality of bargaining.

On the positive side

Firstly, we believe the Commissioner's office and the Department have bargained in good faith with genuine intent to update the agreement for clarity and conciseness where possible, and to consider the union's claims. This has meant substantial technical work has occurred to reorganise and in some cases rewrite sections of the agreement.

Secondly, numerous improvements already agreed to in the NTPS General Agreement (see accompanying article) will likely flow through to the teacher EA.

Thirdly, in relation to some of our claims, in-principle agreement has been reached. These largely relate to ensuring that existing conditions are codified in the agreement in such a way that they will be easier to protect if a future government seeks to take them away.

Sticking points

The employer is adhering very closely to the government's Wages Policy. This means any of our costed claims are being rejected on the basis that they are unaffordable, even where the cost is very modest. It is the AEU's view that chronic problems of excessive workload cannot be addressed without addressing resourcing issues such as class sizes and non-contact time.

Much time in the negotiations has been taken up by seeking a way forward to resolve the issue of teacher appointments to ongoing (permanent) positions. Our bargaining team has been extremely clear from the

outset that we will not endorse any offer without a firm agreement, codified through the EA, of managing and limiting the use of fixed-period employment for teachers.

The Department's Permanency Project has only been a very modest success to date, with 63 fixed-period teachers converted to ongoing employment in Term 4 of 2017. These numbers have been overwhelmed by the larger numbers of new teachers entering our system.

Work continues in bargaining with the Department tabling a detailed proposal for consideration. We will ensure winning greater job security for members remains central to negotiations.

Another issue that has not been resolved definitively is the length of the agreement. A longer agreement locks in guaranteed salary and allowance increases but means it will be longer before substantial changes can be renegotiated.

Our union has not adopted a firm position on the length of the agreement, but we have made it clear to the OCPE and the Department that to endorse a longer agreement, we would expect more improvements and a commitment from the DoE to review and address key matters within the term of this agreement.

As mentioned above, the AEU bargaining team is working as quickly as we can to resolve negotiations so that a detailed offer can be put to you to consider. Our Conference will be an important opportunity for members from across the NT to discuss the detail of the offer. In line with other negotiations, we expect that in the event of an offer being endorsed, pay increases will be backdated to last October when the current EA expired.

Contact the AEU NT office

Please let us know ASAP if your workplace, contact details or income have changed

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