

# AEU NT Member Bulletin 12/2021

23 September 2021

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### **Rallying against the pay freeze; enterprise bargaining update**

A big well done to Greater Darwin members for the strong turnout and enthusiasm at Tuesday's rally against the Gunner Government's 4 year pay freeze. Thank you to the members across the NT who sent messages and photos in solidarity.

Close to 100 members from sub-branches across Darwin joined with members from other public sector unions to demand a better pay offer. This will be the first of many such actions as we seek to convince the government to come up with a fair pay offer. Members in Katherine will rally today, and an event is planned in Alice Springs for Thursday 14 October. Keep an eye out for future events, and make sure you take part in whatever way you can. It is only through strong, collective action that we will be able to beat the freeze.

As our enterprise bargaining survey results show, members overwhelmingly reject the pay freeze, with up to half the education workforce considering looking for work elsewhere if the four-year freeze is enforced. That would be a disaster for Territory education. [We've produced a summary of some of the key responses to our survey, and we encourage you to have a read.](#)

Although the government refuses to budge on its wages policy, unions continue to bargain in good faith. Bargaining will continue this week for members covered by the NTPS general EA, following the decision by all unions to reject the government's offer. Teacher bargaining continues at a good pace, with most union and employer claims now discussed in detail. As the teachers' agreement notionally expires on 11 October, we expect that a formal offer to the union and employees will be made by the Commissioner on or about that date. Once a formal offer is made, we will provide a detailed summary to members.

### **COVID-19, mandatory vaccination and our member survey**

Last week our Branch Executive met and discussed the Gunner Government's latest COVID-19 "roadmap", and endorsed the following:

- We continue to encourage all members to get vaccinated if they are able. The AEU has championed vaccination from the outset, arguing for priority access to vaccines for school-based employees since February.
- We have concerns about the impact of a mandatory vaccination policy on school staffing, given the responses we have had from a minority of members who are adamant they will not be vaccinated. Our view continues to be that persuasion is the best approach to maximise vaccination rates and we will convey this view to government.
- We respect the right of remote communities and land councils to require vaccination for visitors on their land and encourage our members working in and visiting remote communities to take all possible steps to protect the health of community members.
- We will advocate on behalf of our members working in remote areas for government to consider suitable, safe arrangements for these workers when returning from interstate hotspots, as home quarantine will likely not be a feasible option for those living outside Darwin and Alice Springs. We

are concerned about the welfare of remote members, with fatigue and isolation particularly pronounced in this cohort due to ongoing restrictions.

We've had close to 600 responses to our member survey on COVID-19 related matters. The link has been emailed to all members and you can still participate in the survey until Wednesday 29 September. Once the survey is closed we will make the full set of responses available to members, the Minister for Education, the Department of Education and the media.

Interim results show that members' views are broadly supportive of the Gunner Government's proposals. Here are some of the main findings to date:

- Vaccination status: 70% of respondents are already fully vaccinated, with an additional 10% having received their first dose. A further 5% say they intend to be vaccinated, and 15% of respondents say they don't intend to be vaccinated.
- Attitude to mandatory vaccination: 58% of respondents support mandatory vaccination of school-based employees, 31% are opposed and 11% are unsure. A higher proportion of respondents support making vaccination a requirement of working in remote communities, with 67% in favour, 21% opposed and 12% either unsure or deeming the matter not relevant to them.
- Schooling arrangements during lockdowns: 15% support keeping schools open for face-to-face learning during lockdowns, 54% favour a skeleton staff mode and 20% say all learning should take place remotely and online during lockdowns (11% other or not sure).
- Restrictions on interstate travel: Three quarters of respondents support the proposed relaxing of quarantine requirements for vaccinated interstate travellers, with 59% agreeing they should be able to quarantine from home and 16% believing quarantine should not be required, compared to 17% who support mandatory facility quarantine (7% unsure).
- Impact of continuing border restrictions: 5% of respondents said they will move interstate if the NT continues with its current border restrictions in 2022, and 16% said they would be more likely to move. This compares to 17% who said they support the continuing restrictions and 55% of respondents who say the level of restrictions will have no bearing on their attitude.

**Let us know ASAP if your workplace, contact details or income have changed**

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