



AEU NT Member Bulletin 3/2017

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Permanency Project for classroom teachers

Following a sustained campaign by the AEU, the Department of Education will shortly announce a special protocol (the Permanency Project) to offer permanent employment to fixed-term contract teachers. The intent of this process is that dozens of teachers initially, and hopefully several hundred by next year, currently employed on a fixed-term contract basis will be permanently appointed within their school.

This represents a huge step forward for all members. The vast majority of our fixed-term members want a permanent position. Our permanently employed members want a stable team of colleagues to work with, not a revolving door of new entrants to induct.

This initiative follows many months of pressure at all levels from AEU NT: with the Department, with the Commissioner for Public Employment, and with the Gunner Government. It represents a major win for our union and our profession, in which many of you have contributed via your stories and survey responses.

The aim of the Permanency Project is to reduce the proportion of teachers on fixed-term contract from the current level of about 38% to 20%.

How the process works

The Commissioner for Public Employment has authorised a process that enables schools to offer ongoing (permanent) employment to classroom teachers employed on fixed-term contracts without advertising. This means only teachers already working within our system and with “runs on the board” as contract teachers will be eligible under this process.

For a fixed-term employee to be considered eligible, certain criteria must be met, including:

- There must be capacity within the school to absorb more permanent appointments.
- The teacher must have been employed continuously on a fixed-term contract for at least 12 months.
- The teacher must satisfy all requirements relating to teacher registration, performance and suitability.

The union wants all members to work together to ensure we maximise the number of colleagues who are offered permanency through this process.

Role of sub-branches

You can assist at the sub-branch (workplace) level by holding members’ meetings to discuss the potential for conversions in your school. You can pass motions at sub-branch meetings requesting that your principal open up the maximum number of vacancies for yourselves and your colleagues.

In situations where the number of eligible staff exceeds the number of available positions, a closed merit selection process will apply, meaning only eligible teachers within the school may apply.

In these instances, a panel will be convened by a principal or AP, with a school staff member and HR rep also represented. Sub-branches have a crucial role here in ensuring this staff rep is elected and the process is fair and transparent.

The union's Full-Time Officers will continue to review processes with HR and the Department's senior management. If you are concerned about processes within your school, you should contact the union office immediately.

More detailed advice will be forthcoming from HR, but the above summarises how the AEU understands the process will work.

We ask that members take part in the above exercises and work with all the union's structures to share information and press for positions. This is an exciting opportunity to improve job security for members across the Territory, which will in turn ensure more workforce stability and underpin better staff morale and improved results for our students.

Enterprise Bargaining update

This week you will have received a bargaining update from the Commissioner for Public Employment. Despite our agreement expiring this week, at our request the Commissioner has not yet formally made an offer to employees, because we are making progress in negotiations.

Both parties have agreed to take a co-operative approach to bargaining, meaning that all of the union's claims will be explored in good faith, and costed where appropriate.

The view of our bargaining team is that the Enterprise Agreement (EA) requires substantial updating to better reflect current practices and entitlements, and of necessity this is a complex negotiating process that takes time to get right.

The expiry of the agreement simply means that you will continue on your existing pay and conditions. The union will seek to ensure that once agreement is reached, any pay increases are backdated to October 2017.

Wages Policy

Although the union will continue to negotiate in good faith and seek agreement where possible, a major political obstacle is the NT Government's Wages Policy, which significantly restricts the Commissioner's bargaining parameters. This concern is shared among all public sector unions.

Public sector unions are working closely together in the bargaining process to ensure we get the best possible outcomes for all NT public servants. The AEU is involved in bargaining for the General Agreement, which covers our school support staff members. Additionally, unions are involved in bargaining for groups such as firefighters and prison officers.

Unions wrote to members of the Government this week expressing our disappointment that that Government has adopted the same restrictive Wages Policy of the previous CLP Government. Elements of the Policy are actually more anti-union than what is in place for federal public servants bargaining with a conservative government.

The Wages Policy restricts cost increases to 2.5% and seeks to minimise the number of improvements unions can achieve within the framework of an EA. The result is that many of your working conditions are not codified in the EA, and thus are not protected or appealable to the Fair Work Commission.

A major focus of our efforts in this round of negotiations is to include as many conditions and entitlements in the EA as we can, ensuring they are protected.

The “without prejudice” nature of enterprise bargaining means that we cannot provide detailed updates on the status of negotiations, but we will keep you updated as best we can. The Full-Time Officers have held meetings recently in Alice Springs, Darwin and Palmerston, and visits are planned this term to Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Maningrida and Tennant Creek to provide updates.

Contact the AEU

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

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