

## **NTPS TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS' BULLETIN 1/2014**

### **Background**

Negotiations for a replacement NTPS Teachers and Educators' enterprise agreement have been on foot since April 2013 and the proposed agreement was recently voted down by 33.2% of eligible voters (1148 voted 'no' out of 3448 eligible voters).

Yesterday, I met with the Australian Education Union Northern Territory branch (AEU-NT) to discuss the way forward. At the meeting, the AEU-NT advised that they would continue to advance claims that cannot be met under the NTPS Wages Policy 2013–2016 ('the Wages Policy'), such as the claim in relation to inclusion of the staffing formula in the enterprise agreement. This would have the effect of limiting the Northern Territory Government's ability to staff and resource the Department of Education according to its need and current policy priorities. The AEU-NT's continued refusal to acknowledge that this matter is separate to the enterprise agreement is having a significant impact on the progress of the negotiations.

### **Bargaining environment**

While I have reiterated certain factors impacting on current negotiations to the AEU-NT on numerous occasions, I feel that it is important that teachers and educators clearly understand that I am required to negotiate enterprise agreements within the parameters of the Wages Policy which states, amongst other things, that:

- agreement outcomes will have a total overall cost of up to 3% per annum, dependent on efficiency measures achieved;
- agreements are not to include provisions restricting the government's capacity to allocate financial, capital or human resources according to its policy priorities; and
- the earliest the first salary increase is to apply from is the first pay date on or after the parties reach agreement on all matters.

This policy sets the outer limits I can go to in negotiating a new agreement. The government has no intention of agreeing to outcomes in excess of the Wages Policy in enterprise agreements whether for teachers and educators or other sections of the workforce.

It also means there will be no back-dating of salary increases to the nominal expiry date of the current enterprise agreement. In the case of teachers and educators, this means that employees have forgone to date, on average, over \$1,000 in increased salary. This figure will continue to grow until in-principle agreement is reached.

## Current Situation

In my meeting with the AEU-NT yesterday I confirmed that despite the recent ballot outcome I will keep the current offer ([Information Sheet 6 / 2013](#)) 'on the table' and will continue to hold bargaining meetings with the AEU-NT on a monthly basis in a bid to keep the dialogue open.

I reiterated that teacher staffing matters will not be entertained in the realm of agreement negotiations and should be advanced through other more appropriate channels. The AEU-NT indicated that this, together with the quantum of the wage offer and the 4 year duration, will be the platform to continue with industrial action once the Fair Work Commission order suspending protected industrial action expires on 3 March 2014. While I acknowledge the right of AEU-NT members to take protected industrial action after this, I must stress that such action will not alter the government's policy or bargaining strategy, and that any action that threatens the personal safety or health, or the welfare of students or parents or others, will be vigorously defended.

Other groups of employees (Power and Water Corporation and the majority of the NTPS employees under the 'General Agreement') have understood the government is not in a position to offer more than 3% and have accepted agreements on the terms offered. I encourage teachers and educators to consider this very seriously.

I believe the current offer is fair and reasonable and the quantum of the salary increases outstrip agreements recently approved in other jurisdictions, and keeps the NT teachers at the top or near the top in Australia. In this environment of budget constraints and cost-saving measures this offer will provide certainty in the form of a 3% wage increase for teachers and educators over 4 years. Government's current position that the increases to the Superannuation Guarantee charge not be offset by the 3% increase is an added bonus feature of the offer.

I am concerned that the tactics the AEU-NT are taking will only serve to ensure negotiations are unnecessarily protracted; will cause further disruption to schools; will not achieve any further gains and will cause further financial loss to teachers. My representatives will continue to meet with the AEU-NT and encourage a realistic approach to ongoing negotiations, so progress can be made and a pay increase can be passed onto employees without protracted delays.



KEN SIMPSON  
Commissioner for Public Employment

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