EB8 action: vote YES for industrial action for better pay and conditions

The QTU has been negotiating with representatives from the Department of Education and Training (DET) since March in an attempt to reach an acceptable enterprise bargaining agreement.

The only offer so far on the table has inadequate salary increases of 2.5% p.a. for state school teachers and principals, combined with minimal improvements to working conditions. As such, it is an unacceptable offer by DET, on behalf of the Queensland Government. Negotiations are continuing but time is running out for a new agreement from 1 July.

The salaries that result from the Government wages policy would be significantly less than the salary increases recently secured by Queensland Catholic teachers through their EB, which include a salary of nearly $101,000 for Catholic experienced senior teachers by 2018; teachers in the Catholic system would reach this level after 11 years in the classroom. In contrast, the government offer to state school teachers would see them reach a maximum classroom salary of $99,000 after 13 years.

Additionally the salaries currently on offer from the Queensland Government will also see Queensland state school teachers and principals continuing to lag behind their counterparts in New South Wales and Victoria.

The QTU negotiates improved pay and conditions for its members every three years, as part of the enterprise bargaining cycle; we cannot afford to accept an offer now that does not significantly benefit our members.

Two ballots in support of better pay and conditions

While the QTU will continue to negotiate on behalf of members, QTU members must immediately send a strong message to the Queensland Government that the current salary offer cannot be accepted (the government has only offered 2.5 per cent p.a. in line with its general public service “wages policy”; but that does not mean it cannot decide to offer a better deal).

Members will be asked to participate in two ballots. One is being conducted by the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ to give industrial action protected status, the other is being conducted by QTU Reps in your school to decide on the specific industrial action to be taken if necessary.

It is vital that all members vote in both ballots.

Ballot #1 – ECQ ballot on industrial action

Members will start to receive their ECQ ballot papers from 12 July. Make sure your vote counts – it is important that all ballot papers are returned to the ECQ for counting by 8 August. To ensure that your vote counts, you should have your vote in the mail by Thursday 28 July. This will make sure you avoid any unnecessary delays and that your voice is heard in this ballot. At least 50 per cent of members eligible to vote must return their ballot to the ECQ by midday Monday 8 August, and 50 per cent of those who vote must be in favour of the action.

The ballot seeks your vote concerning three questions:

1. An unlimited number of State wide, Regional or Workplace bans? YES ☑ NO ☐
2. An unlimited number of State wide, Regional or Workplace limitations? YES ☑ NO ☐
3. An unlimited number of State Wide, Regional or Workplace stoppages of work of 24 hours duration? YES ☑ NO ☐

The ECQ ballot gives industrial action protected status. Vote YES for all three questions. The QTU ballot will decide specific bans, limitations and stoppages.
As the ballot is a postal ballot, members should be on the lookout for the ballot paper at their preferred mailing address. If you are unsure at which address you will receive the ballot, you can check your details by logging on to MyQTU. You are encouraged to take your ballot papers to your workplace meeting. Your school Union Rep will then be able to collect and return your completed ballot papers by express post to ensure they are received by the ECQ in time.

The former Newman government introduced laws to make it more difficult for unions to ballot their members on taking protected industrial action. Instead of being run by unions with their own members, such ballots must now be run by the ECQ as postal ballots, which is a slow process. That is why the ECQ ballot is being run at the same time as the QTU ballot: we need to have “ticked the boxes” for protected industrial action to be able to maintain pressure on the government for better pay and conditions.

**Ballot #2 – QTU ballot regarding government's offer**

The second ballot will be a school-based ballot conducted by school Union Reps. The ballot will ask members to determine if the government’s offer is acceptable and the form of industrial action to be undertaken in the event that members reject the offer and support protected industrial action in the ECQ ballot.

The ballot will be forwarded to Union Representatives this week following further negotiations with the department. The QTU expects to receive an offer from the government today or tomorrow for members to consider. Additionally, members will be updated via Newsflash of the outcome of these negotiations and the detail of the offer.

**What happens now?**

Attend a workplace meeting to hear an update on EB and take part in the QTU ballot. Don’t forget to also complete and return the protected industrial action (PIA) ballot to the ECQ either directly or through your school Union Rep. It is important that members vote yes in favour of industrial action; we need to send a clear message to the government.

Authorised by:

Graham Moloney

General Secretary