

TO: QTU MEMBERS

Government proceeding with pay freeze - Tell them "No!"

In answering a question in Parliament last Wednesday, the incoming Treasurer reiterated the Queensland Government's commitment to a wage freeze for Queensland public servants, including QTU members in schools and TAFE:

"... We made it clear, and the Premier has made it clear, that there will be a wage freeze for the financial year 2020-21. For the current financial year there will be a wage freeze and that will be delivered.... There will be a wage freeze..." (Hansard 20 May 2020: page 961).

There is no agreement on this freeze. It is a unilateral decision of government made prior to any consultation with unions or their members.

It seems clear that the state government intends to introduce a bill to Parliament to override the enterprise bargaining agreements covering QTU members in schools and TAFE, as well as other public servants. If that is what is intended, it will occur during the next sitting of Parliament between 16-18 June. Based on its public comments, it will be supported by the LNP Opposition.

QTU argues against the freeze

The QTU wrote to the Premier on 14 May opposing the wage freeze. It summarised the views that the Union has expressed repeatedly since the pay freeze was unceremoniously announced. The main arguments are simple:

- a pay freeze is not deserved by teachers and principals, who have worked harder than ever to move from school-based learning to remote and back during the pandemic
- it unilaterally breaks the enterprise bargaining agreement between the government and the QTU
- it is bad economics to reduce the spending power of those in employment at a time when governments are having to stimulate the economy to increase employment.

There was more of course, and that can be read in the letter on the [QTU website](#).

In particular, the QTU has repeatedly pointed out the effect on members in the defined benefit superannuation scheme who are planning to retire over the next year. For them, a pay freeze significantly affects their superannuation benefit on retirement, as well as their pay cheque after 20, 30 or more years of service.

There has been no response as yet to the QTU's letter. The statement in Parliament, however, seems clear enough.

Act to oppose the freeze

QTU Executive met last night (the last meeting of this Executive's term of office) to endorse the next step in campaigning against the wage freeze.

This involves lobbying of all Members of Parliament before the Parliament sits to consider changes to industrial legislation. Over the next month, all QTU members will be asked to contact their MP to oppose the pay freeze and to ask them to do the same.

Expect to receive an email asking you to contact your MP.

COVID-19 makes it difficult to conduct delegations, so most of the lobbying will be by email. Perhaps Zoom delegations will be an option in some places.

If the pay freeze is enacted, Executive has endorsed a plan for further steps that will be progressively communicated to members before action is required.

National Public Education Day

Ironically, tomorrow is National Public Education Day – a day when we should be celebrating the contribution of public education to Australian society, and the incredible feat of professionalism that saw schools move from school-based learning to remote and back again in the space of a few weeks.

Public education is a cornerstone of justice and democracy in our nation. At its basis is the belief that all children – irrespective of circumstance, belief or location – should have an equal opportunity to realise their full potential as a citizen in a fair and just society.

It is a goal for which we have worked and campaigned up to now and will continue to fight for into the future. It is far, far more than the pleas we have heard during the pandemic to get the children back to school so the economy can function.

There is honour and pride in working in public schools. There should be reward as well.

Authorised by:

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General Secretary