National education and union news



Domestic violence leave now available for more workers

New laws to provide 10 days paid family and domestic violence (FDV) leave have come into force for workers in businesses with 15 or more employees after unions campaigned and won the reform for workers leaving a violent relationship.

For workers in small businesses, with fewer than 15 employees, the entitlement will start from 1 August this year. The Albanese Government made this their first change in workplace laws.

The ACTU has marked the occasion by paying tribute to the thousands of survivors who did not have access to this entitlement, many of whom had paid the ultimate price. The union also thanked the millions of workers who had campaigned for change.

On average, it costs $18,000 to escape a violent relationship in Australia and economic security is a key factor determining whether a person can escape a dangerous relationship.

Paid FDV leave will change that equation and save lives. The ACTU wants all workers to understand their rights under the new laws.

- All workers – full time, part time and casual – will have access to 10 days leave, regardless of whether they work a 38-hour week, or fewer hours.
- The full 10-days is available immediately when a worker needs it, rather than accumulating over a period like annual and sick leave does.
- There are rules in place to keep workers' information private including that FDV leave must not be included on an employee's pay slip.
- Full-time and part-time employees can take paid FDV leave at their full pay rate for the hours they would have worked if they weren't on leave, while casual employees will be paid at their full pay rate for the hours they were rostered to work in the period they took leave.

Workers in small businesses continue to have access to five days of unpaid domestic violence leave until their inclusion in the paid scheme from
1 August.

ACTU President Michele O'Neil said workers no longer had to choose between putting food on the table and their safety.

"Our hearts are with families of those for whom paid family and domestic violence leave has come too late and we remember the women taken too soon," she said.

"Paid family and domestic violence leave builds on the long legacy of the union movement campaigning for and winning new rights for workers, enshrined in our employment laws."

NSW election education pledges welcomed

NSW Labor's commitment to end the underfunding of public schools is a significant announcement that will be welcomed by teachers and principals across the state.

The party has pledged a $400 million future education fund to boost underfunded schools, as well as a literacy and numeracy tutoring program for students.

New South Wales Teachers' Federation (NSWTF) President Angelo Gavrielatos said that for a decade there had been a measurable minimum level of resourcing that public schools required to meet the needs of their students.

"But public schools have never been resourced to that Schooling Resource Standard (SRS)," he said.

"The agreement struck by the NSW Coalition with the Morrison Government leaves public schools indefinitely under-resourced while NSW private schools are over-resourced.

"Labor's announcement shows they are prepared to end this injustice and ensure that every public school across NSW is fully funded.

"If Labor wins the election in March, we want to see an agreement struck with the Albanese Government on full funding of public schools as soon as possible.

"The proposed investment in additional teachers, school counsellors and a permanent literacy and numeracy intensive learning program would make a real difference for teachers and the children they educate."

Mr Gavrielatos said NSW Labor had already committed to cut the unsustainable workloads of teachers, axe the government's wage cap, negotiate higher salaries and reverse the Coalition's 80 per cent increase in temporary teachers.

"This is a recognition by Labor that the only way we can stop the teacher shortages and secure the teachers we need for the future is to invest in the profession," he said.

Inequalities in school results

Last year's NAPLAN results shows shocking inequalities in school outcomes between highly advantaged and disadvantaged students in Australia, according to Save our Schools Australia.

Very high proportions of low socio-economic status (SES), Indigenous and remote area students do not achieve national literacy and numeracy standards, compared to very small proportions of high SES students.

By Year 9, low SES, Indigenous and remote area students are several years of learning behind their high SES peers. There has been very little progress in reducing the learning gaps between rich and poor over the last decade or so.

Twenty-nine per cent of low SES Year 9 students were below the national reading standard in 2022, 38 per cent were below the writing standard and 16 per cent were below the numeracy standard.

One-third of Indigenous students were below the reading standard, 44 per cent were below the writing standard and 19 per cent were below the numeracy standard.

Nearly one-quarter of remote area students were below the reading standard, 35 per cent were below the writing standard

and 13 per cent were below the numeracy standard.

By contrast, three per cent of Year 9 high SES students did not achieve the reading standard, seven per cent did not achieve the writing standard and two per cent did not achieve the numeracy standard.

These are an appalling inequity that have continued for far too long. They are an indictment on our education system, governments and society. Australia has a highly inequitable, discriminatory, class-ridden education system that makes nonsense of the idea that we are an egalitarian country.

Funding failures by successive Commonwealth and state governments are a major factor contributing to these education inequities.

To read more visit bit.ly/3llhL0e

Pre-service teacher financial worries

A recent survey of initial teacher education (ITE) students in Victoria conducted by the AEU Victorian Branch found that more than half (54.3 per cent) of pre-service teachers are extremely concerned about experiencing financial stress during their studies.

The survey, which examined the perceptions of ITE students across metropolitan Melbourne and regional and rural Victoria, also found that:

- Almost half (48.9 per cent) of students surveyed noted that unpaid placements were a cause of serious concern and acted as a major potential barrier in preventing them from pursuing ITE studies.
- About 64 per cent of students stated that they should be funded to undertake placements in schools, which are a requirement of teaching qualifications, to cover the loss of income and associated costs.
- About 57 per cent said that expanded school-based internships that would allow employment as paraprofessionals in the last six months of their programs could also provide support to aspiring teachers.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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