National education and union news



School funding plea takes over the sky

The AEU's pre-election campaign has been launched with a spectacular drone show above Sydney's skyline, urging the Albanese Government to fully fund public schools.

As Parliament ended for the year and the federal election looms, the AEU lit up Sydney Harbour with 300 individual drones in a request direct to the Prime Minister to fully fund schools to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

AEU President Correna Haythorpe said Prime Minister Albanese's commitment to fully fund public schools is in danger of being viewed as a broken promise, with outstanding negotiations yet to secure funding for all states.

"This message above Sydney's sky is just the beginning, as we urge the Prime Minister to fulfil the promise that was made by Labor more than a decade ago. We have seen an entire generation of students miss out on this vital funding; we cannot afford for the next generation to miss out as well," she said.

With school funding negotiations with New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria at a standstill, Ms Haythorpe said it was a risky move for the Albanese government to be heading to the federal election without resolving the impasse and providing the funding needed.

To address the funding shortfall, the AEU is campaigning to achieve:

- A full commitment to a genuine 25 per cent SRS share from the Commonwealth.
- A genuine 75 per cent SRS share from states and territories including the removal of the four per cent depreciation tax.

Neither of these issues have been addressed by the *Better and Fairer Schools* legislation that passed the Senate late last month.

"The AEU welcomes the funding floor that is set by this legislation, as it gives certainty to schools by enshrining a minimum

amount of Commonwealth funding," Ms Haythorpe said.

"However, we maintain our ongoing concerns that public schools across the nation will remain underfunded by billions of dollars over the next decade unless that floor is lifted to 25 per cent, and all funding is required to go to public schools rather than the current conditions that allow four per cent to go to non-school based costs."



Australia becomes world leader in protecting workers' rights and safety

The ACTU welcomes Australia becoming the first country in the Asia-Pacific region, and among the first globally, to ratify all 10 fundamental International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions, following the ratification of two work health and safety conventions in Geneva at a tripartite ceremony consisting of unions, employers and governments.

The ratification of the ILO Convention No. 187 (Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health) and ILO Convention No. 191 [Safe and Healthy Working Environment (Consequential Amendments)] demonstrates the federal government's commitment to workplace safety and international labour standards.

This follows the 2022 decision by the ILO to elevate a safe and healthy working environment to a fundamental principle and right at work.

Member countries of the ILO now have an obligation to promote and realise this right, alongside other core principles such as the right to freedom of association, the elimination of forced and child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation.

Ratifying these conventions complements key measures already implemented by the Albanese Government to strengthen workers' health and safety, including the ban on engineered stone and the rollout of Respect@Work recommendations to prevent gender-based violence in the workplace.

ACTU President Michele O'Neil said Australia had committed to leading the world in ensuring every worker had the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

"Working people through their unions take action every day to make workplaces safer and have long campaigned for Australia to align with international labour standards," she said.

"Ratifying these international conventions signals to every Australian that the Albanese Government will protect our workplace rights and demonstrates Australia's commitment to workers' health and safety.

“The new ratifications build on other important actions the federal government has taken to protect workers’ health and safety, like protecting
workers against deadly silica dust, making employers responsible for preventing sexual harassment and implementing all the Respect@Work recommendations.

“Every worker has a right to be safe at work and to return safely to their loved ones at the end of the day.”

Flight attendants celebrate pay rise

From 1 November, more than 800 cabin crew employed through labour hire saw pay rises of up to 28 per cent.

This was due to the Albanese Government’s industrial relations laws that shut down labour-hire wage cutting schemes.

Flight attendants employed by labour hire earn significantly less than their directly employed coworkers despite performing the same role. For full-time cabin crew, this salary gap amounts to thousands of dollars per annum, excluding allowances.

1 November 2024 was the earliest date in which the Fair Work Commission’s “regulated labour hire arrangement orders” could come into effect. Regardless of when the orders are made, companies including Qantas Domestic have committed to pay labour hire workers at least the minimum amount as directly employed cabin crew – amounting to pay rises of up to 28 per cent with back payments from the first full pay period after 1 November.

The labour hire orders were introduced through the Albanese Government’s *Same Job Same Pay* laws that passed last year. The laws closed the labour hire loophole which allowed airlines like Qantas to split their cabin crew workforce across multiple corporate entities and labour hire contractors to avoid paying the higher wages and better conditions of enterprise bargaining agreements.

Fair Work Commission orders that came into force on 1 November also gave pay rises to workers as diverse as mining and meatworks, with dozens more applications still being considered.

The Flight Attendants’ Association of Australia (FAAA) submitted three *Same Job Same Pay* applications in June and July 2024. As a result of these applications, Qantas not only agreed to pay rises for domestic crew, but also sought to amend their EBA for long-haul cabin crew.

The application is currently with the Fair Work Commission for approval and would result in substantial pay rises for about 2,500 international crew.

The *Same Job Same Pay* laws were introduced in response to the industrial relations practices of employers like former Qantas CEO Alan Joyce, who exploited the labour hire loophole to cut workers’ wages.

In an address to the Institute of Public Affairs in July 2023, Opposition Leader Peter Dutton praised Joyce for his economic views: “Full credit to Alan Joyce for engaging in discussions around industrial relations and he’s been very forthright in his views on industrial relations,” he said.

The Coalition voted against the *Same Job Same Pay* laws and have refused to rule out a pay cut for impacted workers if they win the next election.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus said the wage increases were life-changing for flight attendants and their loved ones.

“Working people across many industries are experiencing the benefits of the Albanese Government refusing to bend to big business who lobbied hard to stop these laws, including CEOs like Alan Joyce,” she said.

“The Coalition voted against the laws that delivered these pay rises, they railed against them, and no doubt they will do what big business wants and repeal
them if elected.”

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