AEU statement on Gaza and peace education

The AEU Federal Executive has unanimously adopted an official statement on peace education.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said: “The ongoing genocide has brought unspeakable trauma to the children, families and teachers of Gaza. The AEU stands in solidarity with the teachers, students and education unions of Palestine.”

“We join global calls for an immediate ceasefire and full humanitarian access to rebuild lives, communities and in particular, to rebuild schools.”

Ms Haythorpe said this conflict is also being felt in Australia’s classrooms, staff rooms and communities, which brings a layer of complexity for the profession in how to manage issues which may arise.

“Teachers are reporting increased tension and distress among students. Our members are supporting students from Palestinian, Jewish and other backgrounds, including refugees, who are grieving, angry, confused or afraid,” she said.

The AEU urgently calls upon all Ministers of Education and Departments of Education across the country to provide clear, consistent guidance for teachers about how to discuss global conflicts, particularly the situation in Gaza, to support students and ensure that schools remain safe, inclusive and respectful places for all.

“Right now, teachers are having to help students make sense of complex, confronting global events, often without the resources or professional guidance needed. They are trying to teach empathy, critical thinking and civic understanding in a deeply polarised climate, where even raising these issues can attract scrutiny or backlash from the public, from parents and from education departments,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“It is the right of teachers to educate for peace through the curriculum without fear of reprisal or employer disciplinary action. They need reassurance that they will be backed when they engage students thoughtfully in discussions about war, justice and peace.”

The AEU calls on all governments to ensure that:

- Teachers have the resources, guidance and support they need to educate for peace and to engage in respectful discussions with students and colleagues, without fear of hate and discrimination.
- Teachers have a right to engage appropriately and respectfully with their colleagues about community issues, including all global conflicts and in particular, the current conflict in Gaza.
- Teachers and other educators and all those who are enrolled in public education who are impacted by the conflict are provided with the support they need.

“Australian teachers must be given the professional trust, support, and protection they need to teach with courage, care and conscience,” Ms Haythorpe said.

Further, the AEU Federal Executive has determined that:

- The AEU condemns the Israeli Government’s acts of genocide towards Palestinians in Gaza.
- The AEU supports the ACTU 23 May 2025 statement on Gaza.
- A permanent ceasefire and the withdrawal of the Israeli Government’s military operations in Gaza remains paramount. In such an outcome, the AEU calls on all governments and international aid agencies to urgently work together with Palestinians to restore and rebuild the necessary public infrastructure, schooling, health, housing and sustenance provisions.

To view the AEU Statement on Peace Education in full click here.

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