National education and union news

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Government must be more ambitious on climate target

The AEU is calling on the Albanese Government to lift its ambition on climate action, warning that the recent announcement of an emissions reduction target of 62 to 70 per cent by 2035 is not aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement and will likely result in more than two degrees of warming, with dire consequences.

The AEU is urging the government to adopt a higher, more ambitious target to deliver the strong and urgent action Australia needs.

Extreme weather events, including flooding, cyclones, bushfires and prolonged heatwaves, are increasingly forcing schools, early childhood centres and TAFEs to close, displacing students.

Many schools, early childhood centres and TAFEs across Australia are struggling with inadequate infrastructure including classrooms without air-conditioning, portable buildings unable to withstand extreme weather conditions and communities left without safe learning spaces after disasters.

AEU Deputy Federal President Meredith Peace said the government must recognise that climate change is an education issue as well as an environmental one.

The economic, social and health costs of inadequate action will impact on the learning opportunities of children and young people for generations to come, with greater impact felt by vulnerable students and communities.

“Teachers and students are on the frontline of climate change,” Ms Peace said.
“Every time a school, early childhood centre or TAFE is closed because of extreme weather, students’ learning is disrupted

and communities are thrown into crisis.

“The government’s 62 to 70 per cent target is woefully inadequate. We need bold, ambitious goals that will genuinely reduce emissions, protect our communities and safeguard the future of today’s students.

“We are calling for urgent investment in school and TAFE infrastructure to deal with the current reality of climate change and the growing occurrence of climate related extreme weather events and their impacts.

“With thousands of schools, early childhood centres and TAFEs across the country, there is also a missed opportunity to invest to decarbonise and drive climate action.

“Specific investment in education settings to reduce energy use and adopt renewable energy like solar power would have a significant impact on emissions and provide vital learning opportunities for students.”

The AEU is calling for:

- A clear, ambitious target beyond 70 per cent – not a range – that locks in stronger emissions reductions.
- A roadmap to net zero that recognises the impact of climate change on schools, early childhood settings, TAFEs, teachers and students.
- Urgent investment in infrastructure to ensure every child/student has a safe, climate-ready learning environment, including investment to decarbonise and drive climate action.

“Students deserve a future where their education is not at the mercy of extreme weather events,” Ms Peace said.

“The Albanese Government must listen to the community and step up to show real leadership on climate action, so that our children can have a more certain future, and educators can work in safe environments.”

Unions call for stop on work from home rights swap

Australian Unions are voicing their alarm at attempts by employer groups to exploit the popularity of working from home to sweep away longstanding workplace rights.

Employer groups are pursuing broad changes in the Fair Work Commission that threaten rights to overtime and penalty rates in exchange for greenlighting new work from home agreements.

The employers’ lobby, led by the Ai Group, wants to let employers’ new work from home arrangements for administrative workers wipe out rights to overtime, penalty rates and allowances if they sign on.

The Fair Work Commission initiated the case to insert a “work from home” clause in the Clerks Award. According to research it commissioned, nearly 66 per cent of employees employed under this Award were able to work from home, with 52 per cent agreeing to do so.

The employers’ proposals also arguably conflict with recently passed Federal Government laws to protect penalty and overtime rates.

Australian Unions are concerned the test case could impact thousands of admin workers and set a new low benchmark for other modern awards if adopted in other sectors.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus said the ACTU was alarmed by the sheer scale of the proposals from employers to remove overtime and other entitlements from admin workers.

“Overtime and penalty rates form part of people’s take-home pay and also protect workers from expectations from employers that they work unusual or excessive hours,” Ms McManus said.

“None of the employer groups put up any real evidence as to why they need the changes. In our view, they are using this as an opportunity to gain control over workers and to cut their pay.

“Employers are asking for an astonishing number of basic protections to be stripped away from workers, particularly part-time workers who are largely women and this will worsen the gender pay gap.

“The basic protections at stake here are too important to have taken away and unions are calling on the Fair Work Commission to stop this employer bid to cut rights in exchange for work from home arrangements.”

To read more visit bit.ly/46Uiivp

Higher wages growth means it pays to be in a union

A record 2.8 million working Australians are now covered by collective bargaining agreements, delivering higher annual wage increases – an increase from 2.68 million in the previous quarter.

More than a million extra workers have the benefit of a collective agreement since the *Secure Jobs, Better Pay* laws passed in December 2022, or around a thousand extra workers a day.

The *Trends in Federal Enterprise Bargaining* report shows that workers covered by union negotiated collective agreements get higher wage increases than those on agreements without unions.

Union negotiated collective agreements delivered average annual wage increases of 4.2 per cent, compared to wage increases of three per cent under agreements where no unions were involved, according to the Department of Workplace Relations' report.

With inflation now at 2.1 per cent, workers on collective agreements are seeing strong real wages growth, to make up for nearly a decade of wage stagnation and the recent cost of living crisis.

Private sector workers led the pay uplift, winning average annual wage rises of 4.3 per cent, up from 3.9 per cent in the March quarter – the highest level of wages growth on this measure since 2009.

There were 839 new union negotiated agreements registered in the June quarter, delivering wage increases for an extra 177,500 workers.

The industries with the highest wages growth were construction (5.7 per cent), health care and social assistance (4.5 per cent) and electricity, gas, water and waste services (4.5 per cent).

The new laws are delivering for workers on multi-employer agreements, with 247,500 workers on a current multi-employer agreement in June 2025, up from just 46,200 in December 2022.

More than 200,000 workers have been added to multi-employer agreements since the *Secure Jobs, Better Pay* laws passed. Workers on a current multi-employer agreement saw a wage increase of 5.1 per cent in June 2025.

Of the states, New South Wales recorded the highest average annualised wage increase of five per cent, followed by the ACT on 4.4 per cent, South Australia 4.3 per cent, Victoria 4.2 per cent, Western Australia four per cent, followed by Queensland and Tasmania on 3.5 per cent.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus said: "More workers than ever are securing good wage increases through collective bargaining. The statistics clearly show that the biggest pay increases are won through union negotiated agreements. If you negotiate as a union the average pay rise is 4.2 per cent and if you do not it is three per cent."

"Union members are going about addressing cost-of-living pressures by demanding and winning pay increases that are much better than inflation," she added.

"The revival of collective bargaining has occurred because of the new laws the Labor Government bought in two and a half years ago. These laws were essential to kick start wages growth as collective bargaining is the engine of wages growth.

"If you want a decent pay rise, join your union. When workers are members of a union they get better pay rises, which should not be surprising as banding together gives people much more bargaining power and expertise than they would have by themselves. There has never been a better time to join a union."

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