

2011 BRANCH CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

Professional pay, not performance bonuses
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Early Childhood – Workload

AEU Victorian Branch
Policy document

August 2011





The following resolutions were passed unanimously at the AEU Victorian branch conference held on Saturday August 6, 2011.

Professional pay, not performance bonuses

The AEU opposes current performance pay proposals from the State and Federal Governments on the grounds that:

- They are unprofessional in that they assume teachers will not be committed to students without competitive rewards
- They are ill informed and divisive in that they reward the few for the work of many
- They are anti-educational in that they fail to recognise the collegiate nature of teaching and the developmental nature and complexity of the teaching and learning process
- They go against the research consensus about how to reward and motivate teachers and improve the quality of learning for all students
- They use inappropriate evaluation criteria such as NAPLAN testing which was not designed for this purpose and which will encourage teaching to the test and discriminate against teachers whose students or subjects are not involved in the test program
- There is no research evidence that one-off bonuses improve teaching or attract and retain teachers
- They ignore the national development of professional teaching standards as the appropriate criteria for rewarding teachers
- They are not part of a professional career structure for teachers.

The AEU believes that outstanding classroom teachers should be rewarded through recognition of their teaching knowledge and practice without the need to take up administrative tasks or to promote out of the classroom. Such rewards should be incorporated into the teacher career structure as part of an industrial agreement.

Accordingly, the AEU calls on the State and Federal Governments to commit to a professional pay scheme for teachers which recognises the collegial nature and complexity of teaching, enhances the status of teachers and enjoys the confidence of the profession as a whole. For these reasons it should be based on:

- Agreed professional teaching standards
- An independent and fair process of assessment
- Valid and reliable evidence of achievement and not include measures which would be detrimental to student learning and unfair to teachers such as the use of NAPLAN results
- Salary increases not one-off bonuses
- Salary levels high enough and competitive enough with other professions to make teaching a desirable long term career
- The necessary level of recurrent funding to pay those teachers who meet the agreed criteria.

Review of Skills Reform Agenda

The Victorian TAFE system has been a springboard for tens of thousands of disadvantaged Victorians to create new and positive futures.

The acknowledgement of and commitment to community service targets and obligations have been a long-standing and honourable agenda for the public TAFE system, an agenda that not only builds positive futures for individuals but a civil society. This honourable agenda has been seriously compromised and undermined.

In 2009 the Brumby Government saw fit to introduce the "Skills Reform Agenda", an agenda which imposed massive cost

burdens on students, parents and employers wishing to participate in the public TAFE system to create more positive futures for themselves.

The “Skills Reform Agenda” has been shown to have had serious negative impacts on large numbers of disadvantaged students who had planned to go to TAFE to improve their employment prospects. Choices which once existed for disadvantaged Victorians were taken away.

Leading up to the election the Baillieu Coalition Opposition party acknowledged the negative impact of the “Skills Reform Agenda” on students and promised to reintroduce concessions for students under 25 enrolling in diplomas and advanced diplomas. On its election the Baillieu Coalition Government honoured its promise and reintroduced the concessions for this group of students.

To date, some 4,200 students have benefited from these concessions and have commenced their studies.

It has now been flagged that a review of the “Skills Reform Agenda” is planned for some time in 2012. Disadvantaged Victorians wishing to use the public TAFE system cannot put their lives on hold until 2013 or beyond while the review is undertaken and any associated recommendations for change are actioned.

A full review of the impacts of the destructive Skills Reform Agenda must be initiated immediately and not held over for a further 12 months.

Victorians need equitable access to the public TAFE system to build their futures now.

We call on the Baillieu Coalition Government to bring forward the 2012 full review of the Skills Reform Agenda.

Pay equity case

AEU members in disability services are professional and highly dedicated individuals working to build skills and opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged people in society.

Working in community-based not-for-profit organisations, they have traditionally struggled to achieve equitable wage outcomes and continue to be some of the most under-valued and underpaid workers in Victoria.

In an historic attempt to have this wage inequity addressed, the pay equity case was brought before Fair Work Australia in 2009 by the ASU and supported by the AEU and HACSU.

The Baillieu Coalition Government promised (prior to being elected) to fully fund the outcomes of the pay equity case.

Shortly after coming to power the Baillieu Coalition Government announced it would no longer fully fund any outcomes from the pay equity case. Instead, the Government indicated that services would need to be cut and the workforce decreased if it were required to fully fund the outcomes.

We call on the Baillieu Coalition Government to honour its promise to support the pay equity case and fully fund any salary outcomes for this vital and deserving group of workers in disability services across Victoria.

Carbon price: climate change is union business

That the AEU notes:

1. Current policy on climate change, endorsed at the 2009 Branch Conference, which states the AEU’s belief that decisive action must be taken to reduce carbon emissions and supports the introduction of a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) as one strategy that has the potential to provide an equitable and cost-effective response to climate change.
2. The legitimate role unions have in the climate change debate, as action on carbon pollution will involve major economic restructuring and it is unions who will look after their members and all workers in the move to a low carbon economy.

That the AEU supports the introduction of a price on pollution, which has been proposed by the Gillard government as a first step in moving to the introduction of an emissions trading scheme.

This support is predicated on a commitment from the government to:

- Provide assistance to low and middle income households through compensation
- Protect existing jobs; create new jobs through comprehensive industry policy; and support for the development of skills and

- training to assist workers in transitioning to a low carbon economy
- Programs which attract investment in clean energy and production; and
- Provide support for emission-intensive and trade-exposed industries.

That the AEU commits to participating in the public debate and campaign to see the introduction of a price on pollution, including providing information to members on the issues, encouraging members to contribute to community debate and to lobby local members of parliament to support the legislation when it is introduced into federal parliament.

Early childhood: workload

The AEU welcomes the focus of State and Commonwealth governments on early childhood education and care (ECEC).

The COAG early childhood reform agenda which acknowledges the critical role of ECEC to the life chances of children, and the role of the staff delivering such programs, in large part reflects both the policies and effective advocacy of the AEU.

Nevertheless implementation of the agenda has left the sector in a constant state of change. Since 2009 there has been the introduction of:

- Transition statements
- Victorian early years learning and development framework
- National early years learning framework
- Pilots, planning and preparatory steps for universal access in 2013.

Ahead is further change with the introduction of the National Quality Framework and associated assessment and rating system in 2012.

In parallel with the introduction of these new government initiatives has come a profound increase in the workload of staff, in particular that of teachers.

The message from members has been so strong that it is, for some, a factor which will impact on their decision to stay or leave the profession. It would clearly be counterproductive to the capacities of the sector to respond to the joint state and Commonwealth governments' early childhood agenda to lose teachers and experienced assistants from the profession. The ongoing workload demands also present significant and unacceptable OHS impacts for ECEC staff.

Accordingly the AEU calls on the Ballieu Government to:

1. Amend the Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria to provide for adequate pupil free time for each teacher to write transition statements and to allow staff (both teachers and assistants) to attend the various PD and information sessions associated with the reform agenda.
2. Recommit to funding the Kindergarten IT Project, enabling all community-run kindergartens to access information technology and helpdesk support, systems maintenance, internet and email connectivity to as to more effectively support their service.
3. Provide further support and resources, such as but not limited to ICT hardware and software to facilitate effective and efficient implementation of the various elements of the early years reform agenda, in particular transition statements, EYLF/VEYLDF and the QIP. As part of the system in Victoria that supports the learning, development and wellbeing of children, we believe that DEECD should provide IT for kindergartens in the same way that they provide IT for primary and secondary schools.

Further the AEU will use the results of the AEU EC workload survey and ongoing consultation with members in the preparation of the log of claim for the successor agreements.

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