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IEU welcomes Fair Work Ombudsman's ruling to enforce back-pay of St Peters Lutheran College staff

The Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) Branch welcomes the decision of the Fair Work Ombudsman to enforce back-pay for hundreds of St Peters Lutheran College staff in relation to 'voluntary' co-curricular work.

Reports indicate that the employer had been making lump sum payments to staff who were volunteering in additional roles as sports coaches and coordinators.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has stated that the college admitted to breaching the collective agreement between 2012 and 2020.

IEU-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said our union welcomes the ruling, which will see 753 current and former staff of St Peters Lutheran College collectively receiving close to \$2.5 million in back-pay, including a single payment to one of our members in excess of \$25,000.

"To their credit, the employer voluntarily disclosed their wrongdoing by self-reporting the matter to the Fair Work Ombudsman and have taken steps to rectify the mistakes," Mr Burke said.

"Our union has previously provided assistance and representation to several members employed at the school regarding underpayment queries," he said.

"It has been a matter of long-standing concern in our sector that lump sum payments to volunteers does not appropriately acknowledge an employment relationship.

"Recognising that a proper employee/employer relationship exists in these circumstances is critical for reasons of law, accountability, child protection responsibilities and the like.

"An appropriate employment relationship also ensures staff are compensated fairly for their work and expertise."

Mr Burke said the prevalence of wage underpayment meant employees should remain vigilant about their entitlements.

"The underpayments in this case dated back to 2012, which highlights how easily workplace entitlements can be overlooked."

Mr Burke said union membership provided the best support and protection against underpayment at work.

"Unions have a long history of ensuring fair employment arrangements and have the expertise to address underpayments and any other denial of members' working rights," Mr Burke said.

Contact: Emily Campbell IEU-QNT Communications Officer: ecampbell@ieuqnt.org.au / 0400 746 175

The Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) represents more than 17,000 teachers, school support staff, principals and early childhood education employees across Queensland and the Northern Territory.

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