

29 May 2024

Ipswich Girls Grammar teachers and support staff to strike Employer docks staff pay for taking lunch break

Teachers and school support staff at Ipswich Girls Grammar School (IGGS) will stop work next Tuesday, 4 June from 11:55am until 2:55pm.

It is the first strike action taken by employees in the school's history and comes as staff continue their campaign for better working conditions.

The unprecedented action by Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) Branch members is the result of the school employer's failure to listen to key employee concerns.

Staff are seeking action on three key issues – a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) payment, a new automatic step for experienced teachers and flexible access to leave.

IEU-QNT organiser Andrew Elphinstone said taking any form of protected industrial action, especially strike action, was always a last resort for union members.

"Taking such action is the last thing IEU-QNT members at IGGS want, but their employer has left them no other choice," Mr Elphinstone said.

"Ipswich Girls' Grammar School promotes that values like respect are at the heart of its school community.

"So why isn't the school respecting its teachers and support staff and their working conditions?

"Instead of listening to staff concerns, Ipswich Girls' Grammar School is ignoring the voice of employees.

"Ipswich Girls' Grammar School staff deserve better," Mr Elphinstone said.

The strike action comes after IEU-QNT members at IGGS began their first tranche of protected industrial actions last Monday, 20 May 2024.

These protected industrial actions include employees not attending staff meetings (except those related to staff and student safety) and not being available for any work on scheduled breaks.

Mr Elphinstone said the employer's response to IEU-QNT members taking these low-level actions – including simply taking their lunch break – was to dock their pay.

"These are the kinds of tactics big businesses employ against their workers – not what we expect to see a school employer doing to their staff," he said.

"If IGGS wants to live its values of respect, we call on them as the employer to come back to the bargaining table ready to address employees' concerns," Mr Elphinstone said.

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