

## Frequently asked questions

### Q: Why is there a protected action ballot?

The AEU obtained a protected action ballot order after months of delay and inaction in enterprise bargaining with the ACT Education Directorate.

The protected action ballot is a necessary escalation to ensure members have a democratic say in how the dispute proceeds, and will determine whether we can proceed with protected industrial action in Term 2 2026.

### Q: Do I have to vote?

We ask all members to participate so that your voice can be heard in the ballot.

Under the Fair Work Act, at least 50% of members must cast a vote for the overall ballot outcome to stand, and more than 50% of votes for each individual question must be yes for the action to be approved.

### Q: How should I vote?

Voting **yes** to every action puts the union in the best possible position. Every single vote matters.

The language in the ballot might be confusing, so we've put together [materials](#) that explain what each item means. If you're still unsure of something, reach out to the AEU office via [aeuact@aeuact.org.au](mailto:aeuact@aeuact.org.au)

### Q: I haven't received a link to vote – what should I do?

All eligible members should have now received voting instructions from Vero Voting by text message or email - this will come from [support@verovoting.com.au](mailto:support@verovoting.com.au)

Please check your inbox, junk folder, and SMS messages for your unique voting link. If you are having issues with your voting details, contact Vero Voting.

**If you believe you are eligible to vote but have not received a voting link, please contact the AEU ACT office at [aeuact@aeuact.org.au](mailto:aeuact@aeuact.org.au) or 02 6272 7900**

### Q: What happens after the ballot?

Voting closes at 5:00pm Friday 1 May. Members will be notified of the result on Monday 4 May. If the ballot is successful, Branch Council will decide what and when our first actions will be.

Branch Council will be held on Wednesday 6 May at 5:00pm. All members are welcome to attend.

### Q: Does voting yes mean I'm going on strike?

Not necessarily. Voting yes gives us the option to take protected action at a future date. It doesn't commit you or the union to anything immediately. A yes vote is about giving the union the strongest possible hand in bargaining.

**Q: Will I lose pay?**

It depends on the action. For work stoppages (Q1), the employer may deduct pay for the period of the stoppage. We will be transparent about the pay implications before any action is notified. Most of the actions on the list will not have any pay impact.

**Q: What if I'm asked to do something that's covered by a ban?**

You are protected by the Fair Work Act. If the action has been properly notified and you are an AEU member, your employer cannot take adverse action against you for participating. If you're directed to do something that is covered by a notified ban, you can respectfully decline and explain that you are exercising your right to take protected industrial action. If you feel pressured, contact your sub-branch rep, or the AEU office.

**Q: I'm worried about the impact on students and families.**

This makes sense - we work with students and families every day and we care about these relationships. That's why many of these actions have been deliberately designed to target the Education Directorate and its bureaucratic demands, rather than our students. The majority of actions on the ballot are bans on doing Directorate work - data collection, compliance reporting, system initiatives, meetings - or are about making our campaign visible through clothing and email signatures. The actions that do affect students and families (such as work stoppages and the reporting ban) would only be used if lower-impact actions have not been sufficient.

Disrupting student learning is never something we would consider lightly. We would use such actions to show how serious we are about fixing the problems in our education system.

We care about our students. They face real impacts when the Directorate declines to fix problems in our system. We want to see genuine and effective problem-solving and negotiation. While some of our actions may cause short-term disruption, we do so in pursuit of real, long-term improvements in student learning conditions.

**Q: I'm a principal. How do these actions apply to me?**

Many of these actions apply to you just as they do to any other member - for example, wearing campaign material, adding the email signature, or participating in work stoppages. Some actions are particularly relevant to your role, especially the ban on exercising delegated powers (teaching staff Q6), which is aimed directly at the administrative functions the Directorate has pushed down to school leaders. We will provide specific guidance for principals before any action involving delegated powers is notified.

Almost all principals are AEU members, so no one would act alone – and the AEU office is ready to assist and answer any questions.

**Q: I'm a relief teacher / office-based teacher / school psychologist. How do these actions apply to me?**

If you are an AEU member covered by the enterprise agreement, you are eligible to vote for any action. Some actions may be more relevant to your work than others - for

example, a ban on professional learning may be very relevant to someone, while a ban on completing school improvement admin may not.

**We urge every member to vote yes to every question** to ensure that all members have the strongest possible mandate. When specific actions are notified, we will provide guidance on how they apply to different roles.

### **Q: Why are there two separate ballots? Why are the questions different?**

The AEU represents members covered by two different enterprise agreements: the *Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement* (which covers classroom teachers, school leaders, principals, school psychologists, relief teachers and office-based teachers) and the *Administrative and Related Classifications Enterprise Agreement* (which covers school assistants). Because these are separate agreements with separate bargaining processes, the Fair Work Commission issues two separate ballot orders - one for each agreement.

The questions on each ballot reflect the different kinds of work our members do. Many actions are the same on both ballots, like work stoppages, wearing campaign material, email signatures, and bans on complying with Directorate data requests. But some actions are specific to one group. For example, the teaching staff ballot includes bans on student reporting, class size enforcement, and exercising delegated powers, because these relate to teaching staff roles. The school assistant ballot includes bans on duties outside your position description and supervision outside direct learning, because these reflect the particular ways school assistants are often asked to stretch beyond their roles.

Both ballots need to pass independently. That means we need a double majority among teaching staff *and* a double majority among school assistants.

### **Q: I'm covered by the teaching staff agreement. What does the school assistant ballot have to do with me?**

Everything. We work alongside school assistants every day. Our schools can't function without them, and the issues they're bargaining on - fair pay, role clarity, career pathways, professional recognition - matter for the whole school community. When school assistants are undervalued and under-resourced, it affects everyone.

School assistant members are often in the minority in a sub-branch, and our organising structures among school assistants are still growing. That means teaching staff members and sub-branch reps have a really important role to play in making sure school assistant colleagues know about the ballot, understand the questions, and vote. If you're a rep or an active member, please take the time to talk to the school assistants in your school about the ballot. Help them check they've received their voting credentials. Encourage them to vote yes to every question.

We are strongest when we act together. A successful ballot for both agreements sends a much more powerful message to the Directorate than one alone.

**Q: Will teaching staff and school assistants take action at the same time?**

Where possible, yes. We will aim to coordinate actions across both agreements so that sub-branches can act together in solidarity. When the same action appears on both ballots (like wearing campaign material, email signatures, or work stoppages), the goal would be for teaching staff and school assistants to take that action at the same time. A united school is a powerful thing, and it sends a clear signal to the Directorate that the whole school community is behind our campaign.

**Q: What happens after the ballot?**

If the ballot succeeds, we will notify the Directorate of specific actions in stages, starting with lower-impact visibility measures. Bargaining continues throughout this period. At any time, the program of escalating actions will stop if Branch Council determines that the Directorate's revised bargaining offers are adequate. The goal is not to take action for its own sake - it's to win a fair agreement that meaningfully improves our working conditions and our students' learning conditions.