



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

05/03/2026

STAFFING AND CLASS SIZE CRISIS DEMANDS URGENT ACTION IN ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

At a time when every minute of learning counts, public school students in the ACT are paying the price for a system that cannot guarantee a qualified teacher in front of every class, every day. When a teacher is absent, there is often no funded relief available. On top of this, teaching staff are being pulled out of the classroom to meet Education Support Office (ESO) demands to participate in recruitment panels during the school day.

The result is disrupted learning, larger combined classes, cancelled lessons and students missing out on specialist programs and consistent instruction. Stability and continuity — essential foundations for strong learning outcomes — are being eroded.

Class sizes in the ACT are no longer aligned with the reality of today's classrooms. Student needs have become more complex, yet class size settings have not kept pace. Educators are being asked to deliver differentiated, inclusive learning in rooms that are already beyond capacity, with no enforceable hard caps that can never be exceeded. Larger classes mean less individual attention, delayed feedback, reduced early intervention and fewer opportunities to extend students who are ready for greater challenge.

Without structured reductions where student complexity is higher, schools are left trying to manage increasingly diverse and demanding cohorts in settings that were never designed for that level of need. The impact is felt by every student in the room.

These are not isolated incidents — they are systemic pressures flowing from sustained under-resourcing and inadequate workforce planning.

The AEU has put forward a comprehensive set of reforms needed to address these problems and ensure schools have the staffing and support structures required to deliver quality education through its bargaining claims. The union is seeking guaranteed minimum staffing structures in every school — including sufficient school leaders, classroom teachers, learning support assistants, psychologists, specialist program teachers, qualified teacher librarians, career development practitioners, and administrative staff to meet the needs of students. The claims also propose reforms to the management of teacher absences, so schools are not forced to routinely split or collapse classes.

Educators are still waiting for a response from the Government to these claims.

If the ACT Government is serious about equity, inclusion and excellence in public education, it must engage constructively in bargaining and respond to the reforms educators have put forward. Students deserve stable classrooms, consistent teaching and learning environments that allow them to succeed.

Quotes attributable to Angela Burroughs, AEU ACT Branch President:

“Principals should not have to split or collapse classes just to run recruitment panels. That is a sign of a system under serious strain — and it is students who lose learning time.”

“When there isn't a teacher in front of every class, every day, students' education is disrupted. That should be a red line for any government.”

“We need guaranteed minimum staffing in every school — not just teachers, but learning support assistants, psychologists, specialist educators and administrative staff. Schools cannot deliver quality education without a full team.”

“Hard class size caps that can never be exceeded are essential. If the Government is serious about safe classrooms and genuine inclusion, it must match its expectations with staffing and funding.”

“For too long, schools have been asked to do more with less. That approach is no longer sustainable. Our students and our educators deserve better.”

“Expectations on schools have grown significantly over the past decade. Resourcing has not kept pace. Without structural change, the burden will continue to fall on educators and students.”

For further comment:

AEU ACT Branch President

Angela Burroughs

Ph: 0419 104 193

E: aeuact@aeuact.org.au



Level 1/71 Leichhardt St, Kingston ACT
2604 PO Box 3042 Manuka ACT 2603

P: 02 6272 7900
F: 02 6273 1828