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MEDIA RELEASE

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE BACKS DOWN AFTER AEU TAKES UNLAWFUL INDUSTRIAL ACTION DIRECTIONS TO FAIR WORK COMMISSION

The ACT Education Directorate has withdrawn directions issued to employees participating in protected industrial action after the Australian Education Union ACT Branch initiated proceedings in the Fair Work Commission.

Late on Friday 26 June, at 5:17pm, the Directorate emailed employees directing those participating in protected industrial action to complete a timesheet detailing their industrial action. The directions were issued without consulting the AEU and after business hours, leaving members with no meaningful opportunity to seek advice from their union before industrial action commenced.

After becoming aware of the directions on Monday morning, the AEU immediately sought an explanation from the Directorate and requested an urgent meeting to resolve the dispute. Despite repeated requests, the Directorate failed to explain the legal basis for its directions or engage with the union. The AEU subsequently lodged a dispute with the Fair Work Commission, after which the Directorate withdrew the directions.

AEU ACT Branch President Angela Burroughs said the Directorate's conduct demonstrated a concerning disregard for its treatment of staff.

"The Directorate attempted to intimidate employees exercising a lawful workplace right by issuing last-minute directions it could not justify," Ms Burroughs said.

"Sending these directions at 5:17pm on a Friday, without consulting the union and leaving members unable to seek advice before industrial action commenced, was underhanded and completely unacceptable."

Ms Burroughs said the Directorate had every opportunity to explain or defend its position but instead chose to abandon it.

"When we asked the Directorate to explain the legal basis for these directions, it couldn't—or wouldn't. Rather than engage with the union to resolve the issue, it forced us to seek the intervention of the Fair Work Commission."

"The Directorate's backflip speaks for itself. If it believed these directions were lawful, it had every opportunity to defend them."





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Ms Burroughs said the episode highlighted the need for the Government to approach bargaining and industrial relations in a more constructive way.

"Protected industrial action is a legal workplace right. Educators deserve an employer that respects that right, follows proper process, and engages constructively with its workforce."

"Instead of attempting to frustrate employees exercising their legal rights, the Government should be focused on resolving the issues that have led educators to take industrial action in the first place."

The AEU ACT Branch remains committed to reaching agreements for teaching staff and school assistants that address the challenges facing ACT public schools. The union will continue to work constructively with the Government to secure the resources, staffing and support needed to strengthen the public education system and deliver the future ACT students deserve.

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