



3 June 2010

PMSA SCHOOLS OPEN TODAY DESPITE STRIKE ACTION BY UNION

Queensland's four Presbyterian & Methodist Schools Association (PMSA) schools Clayfield College, Somerville House, Brisbane Boys' College and the Sunshine Coast Grammar School, are open today despite strike action by the union.

PMSA's Executive Manager Michael Willis said students attending each of the four schools today would be well looked after, with 57 per cent of staff including teachers and administration officers arriving for work.

"The number of PMSA staff who came to work today, despite the strike, is a very positive sign and demonstrates the respect and commitment we all have to our students' ongoing education," Mr Willis said.

"We are, however, extremely disappointed in the misinformation being provided to parents from union representatives over alleged school closures and staff attendance.

"We're concerned some parents may have decided not to send their children to schools, believing they were closed or classes were not functioning as normal."

Mr Willis said due to the strike action modified class programmes were provided and included valuable curriculum information with a combination of academic and other learning activities.

"Those students who were kept at home today because of incorrect information have missed out on valuable learning opportunities," he said.

"The exams scheduled for some senior students have also proceeded as planned with the exception of a number of practical exams which require specific teachers to be present.

"I would be very disappointed to hear senior students missed out on sitting these exams because of what they were hearing in misleading statements by union representatives.

"The education, well being and safety of students is, as always, PMSA's first priority."

PMSA was extremely disappointed that despite further negotiations and an offer of substantial increases in wages and benefits for their teachers, the Queensland Independent Education Union (QIEU) was determined to push an unreasonable expectation onto the PMSA's schools.

"We are unable to accept the Union's terms which are not financially sustainable. QIEU's reaction was to initiate industrial action against us in the form of today's strike," Mr Willis said.

"The PMSA has the utmost respect for and commitment to our teaching staff and I can confidently report we have made every effort to avoid this action. However, our very competitive offer, which matches or betters wages in state schools and most Queensland private schools, has been rejected by the QIEU."

The PMSA has worked for nearly a year with PMSA teaching staff and the QIEU to negotiate a new enterprise agreement. To maintain and continue our commitment to excellence in education we have offered our teachers, over the life of the agreement:

- Allowance increases of 22% for senior administrative roles and a new competitive allowances structure.
- A wage structure that matches or exceeds most private school wage levels overall.
- A very competitive wage increase of 16.5% over three years for starting teachers.
- New allowances for experienced classroom teachers, providing an overall wage increase for senior classroom teachers of at least 18.2% and up to 22.7%.

“We wish to thank parents for their support during this time. The PMSA is hopeful of resolving this conflict but remains committed to the best and fairest outcome for our entire schools’ communities,” Mr Willis said.

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