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Shalom Christian College embarrasses Uniting Church of Australia

Shalom Christian College is embarrassing the Uniting Church of Australia by misleading the Church in regard to the use of Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) for College staff according to the Queensland Independent Education Union (QIEU).

QIEU General Secretary Terry Burke said Shalom Christian College is implementing AWAs that encompass some of the worst aspects of the federal industrial relations legislation – an action in direct odds with the position of the Uniting Church of Australia.

“The Church holds a strong public stance on its opposition to the Howard government’s IR laws and their social impact and has confirmed this in writing to QIEU,” Mr Burke said.

“From the correspondence we have received, the Church is under the belief that the College Board ‘is committed to deal justly and fairly with the staff’ at the College,” he said.

“They also believe that ‘the process being followed and the terms being offered are consistent with the principles and values of the Uniting Church’ as a result of their discussions with the College Board,” Mr Burke said.

Mr Burke said the reality however, was that the Shalom Christian College Board was stripping away fundamental employee working rights and conditions through the use of AWAs.

“Under the AWA proposed by College management, staff will lose guaranteed access to annual salary increments and pay increases,” Mr Burke said.

“Staff will also lose some public holidays, penalty rates for working overtime and will be required to give at least one term (approximately 10 weeks) notice of resignation,” he said.

“The employer on the other hand is only required to give as little as one week notice when terminating staff,” he said.

“Clearly the Uniting Church has been misled and it is most unfortunate that Shalom Christian College has embarrassed the Church in such a way when the Church has maintained such strident criticism of the federal IR laws and emphasised the need for the protection of working rights and conditions of Australian workers and their families,” Mr Burke said.

Mr Burke said the pursuit of AWAs by Shalom Christian College would impact on the quality of education provided and threaten the very thing the College purports to value most – its students.

“The indigenous students of the College should not have to suffer because of the unjustified and unnecessary actions of the College Board,” Mr Burke said.

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“The Queensland Independent Education Union represents over 14,500 non-government education sector employees including teachers, principals, school support staff, grounds and maintenance staff, early childhood education staff and employees in business, international and English language colleges.”