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Kids to stay home today

PARENTS of children at two southside independent schools were warned to keep them home when teachers strike today (Wednesday).

Teachers at Villanova College at Coorparoo and Lourdes Hill College at Hawthorne are among 29 independent schools walking off the job over pay.

Independent Education Union of Australia Queensland Branch president Andrew Elphinstone said most teachers would be absent and classes would be cancelled.



Schools to close over pay strike

FIVE Catholic schools in the Far North will close tomorrow as more than 500 teachers are expected to protest for better pay conditions.

St Mary's Catholic College, Woree, St Therese's School, Bentley Park, Holy Cross School, Smithfield, St Joseph's School, Atherton, and St Thomas's School at Mareeba will close for the full school day.

Another five Catholic schools in the Cairns diocese will open with supervision, while 16 will operate normally.

Catholic Education Services Cairns diocese executive director Bill Sultmann said fewer than 20 per cent of schools would close.

Senior staff will be at those schools for emergencies and inquiries, Dr Sultmann said.

"We deeply regret the inconvenience to some students and families. Our message to all staff is: don't let industrial action diminish your care and attentiveness to needs of students and colleagues."

Teachers have been offered a 12.5 per cent pay increase over three years, including a 4.5 per cent increase paid from last May.

Dr Sultmann said further increases being sought by the union were not affordable.

Cairns teachers will join strike action with teachers from more than 80 Catholic schools across the state.

The Queensland Independent Education Union said teachers at the top of the pay scale earn about \$7000 less than Catholic school teachers in New South Wales.



Strike to close classes

Teachers fight for rise

Tanya Chilcott
SCHOOLS REPORTER

SCHOOLS have cancelled classes and some will close tomorrow as Catholic teachers get ready to strike over pay.

Sports training and trials have also been cancelled at some schools after action was extended to extra-curricular activities from tomorrow.

More than 40 schools across Brisbane, Cairns and Toowoomba will be affected by the strike.

It follows failed negotiations between Catholic employers and the Queensland Independent Education Union, which last week rejected a wages offer similar to that accepted by state school teachers.

QIEU general secretary Terry Burke said it was "a mediocre offer that would relegate us to being some of the lowest paid teachers in Australia".

The strike has caused some Brisbane schools to cancel classes, while five in Cairns and one in Toowoomba will close.

Some schools will have a mixture of supervision and lessons.

Most schools will have limited supervision, while about 30 in the Toowoomba and Cairns diocese will operate as normal.

The strike has fallen in the middle of an exam week, causing some schools to shift tests or use a skeleton staff to administer them.

At St Joseph's Nudgee College parents have been asked to find alternative arrangements for day students, with one exam moved to Thursday.

Marist College Ashgrove and All Hallows' School have cancelled classes but will still be running some exams, with supervision available for other students. But classes will run as normal for some St Joseph's Gregory Terrace, Padua and St Edmund's College pupils, with supervision for other year levels.

The industrial action is also impacting on sporting activities.

For a full list of the affected schools go to www.thecouriermail.com.au.



Catholic teachers take action

CATHOLIC teachers from Warwick, Stanthorpe, Allora and Clifton will gather in Warwick tomorrow for protected industrial action as they fight for better professional rates in pay.

Queensland Independent Education Union Darling Downs organiser Greg McGhie said the meeting was for them to discuss the position put forward by employers.

Employees want earlier access to the leading teacher allowance and access to an additional pay point which recognises teachers' experience.

Director of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Toowoomba John Borserio said less than one-third of Catholic schools in the diocese had been affected by the action

to varying degrees.

"Principals have kept in close communication with parents within the most affected school communities and plans have been put in place to minimise disruption to student learning and ensure students are safely supervised," Mr Borserio said.

St Mary's Primary School will have only a supervised program offered for parents who are unable to provide care, and St Patrick's will operate a modified program where all students are able to be present.

Assumption College at Warwick, St Joseph's at Stanthorpe, St Francis de Sales at Clifton and St Maria Goretti at Inglewood will all operate under a normal program.

Teachers will meet at 9.30am at the Criterion Hotel on Palmerin Street tomorrow.



St John's teachers strike over wages

The majority of St John's school teachers will be striking on Wednesday as part of an ongoing pay dispute with their employers.

The Queensland Independent Education Union has been negotiating with their Catholic employers for more than 12 months, with no real progress being made on the issue.

As a result thousands of Catholic school teachers across the state will be picketing against the issue this Wednesday.

Currently Queensland's Catholic teachers get paid \$7000 a year less than their interstate counterparts, despite working the same amount

of hours.

"We're \$7000 behind our interstate colleagues, if we're doing the same job and working the same hours why are we not getting exactly the same pay?" St John's QIEU spokesman Steve Swires said.

Mr Swires said St John's teachers would not be withdrawing from co-curricular activities, despite many of their colleagues taking that line of action.

"We thought that taking that action would be detrimental to our students and that our kids would suffer in the long run," Mr Swires said.

Mr Swires apologised for any imposition placed on parents and he

hoped that parents would get behind the teachers in their campaign.

"We don't take this action lightly," he said.

"We're hoping that parents will say "we support them" and take action by writing, phoning or emailing our employers and voicing their concerns."

Despite the action the school will remain open on Wednesday.

"We will remain open in a supervisory setting," St John's principal Michael Newman said.

"We won't be following any formal curriculum but parents can still drop their kids off here for the day," he said.