

Week of action gets traction

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We came, we saw ... they responded. It could be the catchcry that sums up Federation's week of action over pay inequity for pre-2016 teachers.

Teacher Association representatives met with more than 50 state MPs from across the political spectrum during the week of action in August to air members' concerns about the pre-2016 teacher pay issue and now the results have been detailed in Hansard, the official parliamentary record.

Federation Organiser Paul Robson said the response to the action proved the value of the union's grassroots at a local level.

"We've had delegations attend many meetings with state MPs and they've made their feelings known," Mr Robson said. "The State Government is responsible for creating this problem and therefore must take responsibility for solving it.

"I urge members and supporters to keep up the political pressure on the State Government to ensure equal pay for equal work."



In a Private Member's Statement to the Legislative Assembly, the Member for Kogarah Stephen Kamper told the House he didn't have enough chairs in his office when "a large number of teachers who are outraged by this [pay disparity] came to my office during the week" of action.

"In any workplace structure where many people are performing similar tasks, particularly when their salaries have fixed annualised increases, it is important for both fairness and workplace morale that those performing the same work receive the same compensation," Mr Kamper said.

"Quite frankly, it is totally insulting that the Government has allowed the issue to continue for so long. It is showing a complete lack of respect for hardworking teachers and appears to be taking advantage of the dedication of teachers to their profession."

Mr Kamper was joined by the Member for Prospect Hugh McDermott, Blue Mountains Labor MLA Trish Doyle, Member for Maitland Jenny Aitchison, who told Parliament of the plight of 3500 teachers who are paid less than their colleagues as a result of the transition to standards-based

remuneration (SBR). For some teachers in public schools who commenced teaching prior to 2016, the transition to the new pay scale has resulted in financial disadvantage compared with colleagues employed after 2016, and teachers in Catholic schools.

The issue was also raised in the annual Budget Estimates inquiry, held in the first week of this month, when Labor MLC Anthony D'Adam asked Education Minister Sarah Mitchell and Department Secretary Mark Scott

whether the pay disparity was a “mistake” and pointed out that some teachers were “almost \$40,000 behind in pay”.

“The processes were put in place to ensure that no teacher went backwards in terms of their pay, no teacher lost money,” Ms Mitchell told the hearing, adding, “There are clearly concerns that have been raised by teachers in relation to these matters and they have been raised with me, as I said, by local members, and these are the sorts of matters that will be negotiated as part of the upcoming award.”

Mr McDermott received a delegation from Fairfield Teachers Association and attended a meeting of the Blacktown Teachers Association during the week of action and told Parliament: “NSW teachers do not enter the profession for the money; they do it because they care about the children in their charge.

“I call on the Berejiklian Government to stop hiding behind the Public Sector Wages Policy and to work constructively with the NSW Teachers Federation to address this issue and ensure that teachers are paid fairly and equitably for the work they do.

“All independent schools have already moved to fix a similar issue with their teachers. They made the choice to transition all teachers employed after 1 January, 2014, directly to standards-based remuneration, and the Berejiklian Government should do the same.”

Mr Kamper said the delegation he met explained that the major impasse to the correction of the pay discrepancy is the Government’s “slavish adherence” to its 2.5 per cent wages cap policy.

“I know that local teachers have contacted many members in this place on the issue,” Mr Kamper told Parliament. “I challenge any member to say that they believe this situation is fair. I am sure all members know how important their local teachers are to their electorate.”

— Scott Coomber