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## About the offer

### What is in the offer to employees?

Key features include:

- **A minimum 7% wage increase for all employees from the start of the 2026 school year** plus further wage rises (including in 2026 if necessary) to match the total percentage increases the Victorian Government agrees to pay government school employees in its upcoming negotiations. This will guarantee parity between Catholic and government school employees over the life of the four-year agreement.
- **A $1500 sign on bonus** for full time employees (pro rata for part-time employees).
- **A minimum of 5 days off as time in lieu for full-time teachers**, reducing administrative burden and giving teachers full days off instead of hours here and there.
- **Benefits for non-teaching staff** include changes to the Education Support classifications at Level 3, 4 and 5 which provide higher starting salaries and higher salaries at the top of each level as well as a new top salary band (Level 6).
- **Increased graduate salaries** to help attract more teachers to the profession.
- **Higher leave entitlements** including an extra four weeks of paid parental leave (increasing from 16 weeks to 20 weeks, or 40 weeks at half pay), paid lactation breaks, increased compassionate leave (from 3 to 5 days), leave for employees managing chronic symptoms associated with, endometriosis, menopause, polycystic ovary syndrome and menstruation (5 days where an employee's accrued personal/carer's leave is the equivalent of 15 days or less), and natural disaster leave (5 days).
- **Increases in allowances for positions of leadership** through a revised structure.
- **Benefits for deputy principals** delivering higher starting salaries, and higher salaries at the bottom and top of each level.
- **More recognition for the work of primary principals.** A revised classification structure delivering higher starting salaries and higher salaries at the bottom and top of each level

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### Why has VCEA made an offer to employees?

VCEA, in partnership with Catholic school employers, has made an offer to improve the wages and conditions of Catholic school employees by the start of the 2026 school year.

- The offer VCEA has made gives employees a path to securing improved pay and conditions, quickly.
- If there is sufficient support from employees, VCEA will request that the Independent Education Union (IEU) and Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) agree to proceed to a vote on the enterprise agreement. If agreement is withheld, VCEA will ask the Fair Work Commission for a voting order so we can take the offer to a formal ballot to turn it into an enterprise agreement.
- We have taken this step because VCEA's repeated, respectful requests to meet and bargain with the IEU and ANMF for a cooperative agreement have been declined.

### Why do employers and the VCEA want an agreement by 2026?

- There are significant benefits for all staff and employers in having a new agreement in place from January 2026.
- Staff have indicated extra pay is their top priority in a cost of living crisis and VCEA and Catholic employers want to deliver that as quickly as possible.
- Employers would have budget clarity to plan for the new school year, and a chance to work on any required administrative changes ahead of time.
- Having an agreement in place for the start of the school year would mean we can all focus on our core work in 2026.

### Will we have pay parity with Victorian government sector?

Yes.

The offer includes a minimum 7% wage rise for all employees from the start of the 2026 school year. Additional wage rises will match the total percentage headline increases the Victorian Government agrees to pay government school employees when their deal is finalised next year.

This approach gives Catholic school staff an early wage rise, while still guaranteeing pay parity between Catholic and government school employees over the life of the 4-year agreement.

*What if the government agrees to pay more than 7% next year?*

If the government school agreement increases wages by more than 7% next year, Catholic school employees will get a further pay rise in 2026 to match the headline increase in Year 1 of the agreement.  The headline wage rises in the public sector agreement for Years 2, 3 and 4 will then be adopted for Catholic school staff.

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*What if the government agrees to pay less than 7% in Year 1?*

If the government school sector agreement pays less than 7% in Year 1, the Year 2 pay rise will be adjusted to realign Catholic and government school wages. The headline wage rises in the government school agreement for Years 3 and 4 will then be adopted for Catholic school staff. See the EB25 offer document for examples.

### What is the context for the initial, minimum 7% increase?

Teachers are paid the same wages in Catholic and government schools in Victoria. This is called pay parity, and it has been in place since 1997.

The Victorian Government and the Australian Education Union are currently negotiating for a new enterprise agreement, which is not expected to be finalised until the second half of 2026.

In order to deliver benefits to Catholic school employees at the start of 2026, VCEA has made an offer that includes an initial minimum 7% increase, plus a commitment to further increases (including in 2026 if needed) to match the government sector wage outcomes over the life of the agreement.

### What is the full pay rise over four years likely to be?

The offer proposes a minimum 7% increase in year one, with further increases matching the headline pay rises in the Victorian Government agreement with government school employees.

To provide some context, the Victorian Government's wages policy provides for maximum increases of 3% each year over the life of a four year agreement. However, recent Victorian Government enterprise bargaining outcomes include 20% over 4 years for Victoria Police (i.e. 5 per cent a year), 28.4% over four years for nurses and midwives, and 21% over four years for Victorian TAFE teachers.

### How does the offer compare to NSW teacher pay rates?

This offer will bring us closer to NSW teacher wages. Importantly, it gives all staff - teaching and non-teaching – the same wage increases, which didn't occur in 2023 when NSW passed on their significant increases to teachers. . Victoria already has the best conditions in the nation in relation to scheduled class time and time in lieu, the most hours quarantined for teacher self-directed time per week across the country and if this offer is supported we will have the best parental leave (20 weeks) – 6 weeks more than in NSW schools (14 weeks). See here for a full comparison.

### How will the Time in Lieu provisions work?

The offer provides a minimum of 5 days off as time in lieu for full-time teachers, reducing administrative burden and giving teachers full days off instead of hours here and there. Click here for more information on how TIL will work for part-time teachers and the new, additional $150 per night camp allowance.

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## About the staff survey

### Why am I being asked to complete a YES/NO survey about the offer?

VCEA and Catholic school employers will only proceed to a formal vote on a new agreement, which is an essential step before higher wages and benefits can be passed on to employees, if employees show their support for its offer.

We encourage you to vote and to vote YES in support of VCEA's offer.

### How do I vote?

On Friday 17 October VCEA will email you a unique link to a survey. It's a quick yes/no survey. Voting will be open until midnight Friday 24 October.

### What happens if enough employees vote YES?

If enough employees vote YES, VCEA will ask the Independent Education Union (IEU) and Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) to agree to a vote on a new enterprise agreement. If they decline, VCEA will ask the Fair Work Commission for a voting order.

You and your colleagues will then have the opportunity to participate in a formal vote. If this is successful and the agreement is approved by the Fair Work Commission, higher wages and better conditions will apply from as early as January 2026.

### What happens if employees vote no or don't vote?

VCEA and Catholic school employers will likely fall into line with the Victorian Government enterprise bargaining timeline as we have done in previous years.

In these circumstances, negotiations are unlikely to be finalised until the Victorian Government enterprise bargaining agreement has been agreed.

This is not expected to happen until late 2026 or beyond. There will be no changes to wages or conditions until that time.

### Will my vote be confidential?

Yes.

All staff will be sent a unique link to complete the survey to indicate support for the enterprise bargaining offer. A unique link ensures each employee can vote only once in the survey. No individual responses will be tracked or reported to any party.

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### Is this a legally binding vote?

The staff survey isn't a legally binding vote – it's a mechanism to let VCEA know whether we should keep progressing the offer or stop. If there is sufficient support, we will progress the offer. If we get support to keep going, you will have another chance to consider the offer before a formal vote.

### When will a formal vote and Fair Work Commission approval happen?

If enough employees vote YES, VCEA will ask the Independent Education Union (IEU) and Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) to agree to a vote on a new enterprise agreement. If they decline, VCEA will ask the Fair Work Commission for a voting order. We would seek a formal vote quickly. If this is successful and the agreement is approved by staff the $1500 sign-on bonus will be paid in December 2025 (pro rata for part-time employees) and new wages and conditions will apply following approval of the agreement by the Fair Work Commission.

### Can I vote yes if I have already signed the statement of support for an SIA?

Yes, you can still vote in support of this offer.

### When does voting open and close?

On Friday 17 October VCEA will email you a unique link to a survey. Voting will be open until midnight Friday 24 October.

### Where can I view the full agreement document?

The offer contains the substantive changes we are proposing to make to the current agreements, it's not the full agreement. No substantive changes to other conditions and entitlements contained in the current agreement are being proposed.

If the offer is supported, we will seek to move to formal vote on the proposed new agreement, at that point staff will be provided a copy of the proposed new agreement in full to consider before formally voting on the agreement.

### Are employers allowed to put an offer directly to employees?

Yes, an employer or an authorised bargaining representative of employers can put a genuine offer directly to employees to gauge their support of an offer and this approach is consistent with good faith bargaining requirements.

VCEA is trying try to move this offer forward because we believe employees want wage benefits as soon as possible and it is important to employers to have budget certainty for 2026.

There is a lot of frustration about delayed negotiations last time, and VCEA has listened to those concerns and is trying to address that in a very practical way.

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## About the agreements

### What is a cooperative workplace agreement?

Under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth), a cooperative workplace agreement involves at least two employers and their employees, allowing multiple employers to be covered by the same agreement.

VCEA is seeking to negotiate a cooperative workplace agreement (multi-enterprise agreement) covering all 34 Catholic school employers and VCEA with the aim of achieving unity, consistency and portability across and between Catholic school employers.

This is in keeping with the approach in 2008, 2013, 2018 and 2022 where employees, the IEU and Catholic school employers successfully made multi-enterprise agreements covering the great majority of Catholic schools in Victoria.

### Why does VCEA believe a  cooperative agreement is appropriate?

Catholic employers have consistently shown a willingness to respond to the needs of staff. The agreement type has not prevented progress—it has enabled it. It has allowed us to negotiate improvements collectively, ensuring that no school or system is left behind.

VCEA strongly believes that working productively with the IEU, ANMF and other representatives within the current cooperative workplace agreement framework is the most effective and efficient way to deliver benefits to employees as soon as possible.

Agreements made in 2008, 2013, 2018 and 2022 were overwhelmingly supported by employees, and demonstrate that Catholic school employers and the IEU have a strong history of effective enterprise bargaining, however, there were some delays in those negotiations. VCEA and Catholic school employers have heard directly from employees and principals on the importance of delivering a timely outcome ensuring that wage improvements are provided to employees as soon as possible.

### Why doesn't VCEA support a Single Interest Agreement?

Catholic employers have negotiated successfully with unions under the cooperative bargaining framework for decades. A different agreement type doesn't necessarily deliver different outcomes: the Catholic and Victorian Government sectors currently have different agreement types, similar conditions and the same pay. VCEA has already committed to pay parity, with an early minimum 7% wage rise from January so an SIA won't change the pay rises.

Comparison between types of agreements can be viewed here.

### When do the current agreements expire?

The current agreements expire on 31 December 2025.

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## What happens after the agreements expire?

The current agreements expire on 31 December 2025. Even after the expiry date, the current agreements remain in effect until replaced. Employees will continue to work under the terms of the existing agreements until a new one is approved.

## What are the current agreements?

The current agreements are:

- Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2022
- Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited Schools and Secretariat Agreement 2022
- Catholic College Sale Limited Agreement 2022

## What does the offer mean for union consultation?

VCEA and Catholic school employers respect and value the role of unions, and we have a long history of bargaining together for positive outcomes for Victorian Catholic school employees. We took the step of making an offer directly to employees because the IEU and ANMF have refused to meet to bargain for a cooperative agreement since 21 July. The focus on an SIA meant no headway was being made on wages or conditions that could benefit employees in January 2026. We continue to seek meetings and feedback on the offer from the unions as part of the enterprise bargaining process. We want to work with them.

## How does this process align with Catholic Social Teaching?

- A key principle of Catholic Social Teaching is the Common Good – the proposed improvements to wages and conditions benefit employees, employers and school communities. Making this agreement would allow us to spend 2026 focused on our core work of educating students.
- Catholic Social Teaching is a rich and interwoven framework that calls us to hold multiple ethical principles in balance and to act in the best interests of staff, our communities, and the mission of Catholic education.
- Catholic education in Victoria has long demonstrated a deep commitment to sector-wide solidarity. Despite the reality that our schools are operated by many different employers, we have consistently worked together to ensure, under the framework of the Common Good, that all staff receive equal rights and compensation.
- This unity across diversity is not just operationally efficient—it is ethically profound. It reflects our shared commitment to the Common Good, ensuring that no school community is left behind and that every employee is valued equally.

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- VCEA and Catholic employers remain committed to fair and competitive compensation and are committed to engaging in the bargaining process with integrity, transparency, and a deep respect for staff.
- VCEA and Catholic employers will continue to listen, to collaborate, and to uphold the values that define Catholic education.