

STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS — WORKING CONDITIONS

717. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the Minister for Commerce:

I refer to the minister's media statement of 1 September 2011 regarding the current negotiations with the state's teachers and his statement that teachers' working conditions will be "enshrined in a memorandum of understanding".

- (1) Will the memorandum of understanding have the same legal status as the present School Education Act Employees' (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreement 2008; and, if not, what legal status will it have?
- (2) If, as the minister says in his media statement, these are working conditions, why have they been moved to a memorandum of understanding instead of remaining in the general agreement?
- (3) When an agreement is finally reached, will the pay increases be backdated to the end of the 2008 general agreement; and, if not, why not?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) No, it is not a registered instrument. However, disputes on items contained in the memorandum of understanding can be dealt with in the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission.
- (2) All clauses being removed will be covered by the memorandum of understanding and are being taken out because general agreements are structured to cover conditions of employment such as salaries, allowances and leave. These items deal with management prerogative.
- (3) No. Due to the protracted nature of the negotiation with the union, the opportunity to backdate the wage increase in accordance with government wages policy has now passed.

I also observe at this time that the state school teachers of Western Australia perform a valuable job, which the government and, I am sure, all of us in this place appreciate. That is why when we came into office we gave them a six per cent wage increase to make sure that we had the best paid teachers in Australia. We are trying now to give them a further wage increase, which will retain their position as the pre-eminent paid teachers in Australia. Preventing this from happening is the State School Teachers' Union, which will not go and ask its own members if they want to accept the offer that is on the table. That is why, as was suggested in the question, the preservation date has been lost. This intransigence by the State School Teachers' Union is costing each teacher in this state between \$80 and \$140 a fortnight. That is how much they are losing. Those are the things that schoolteachers in this state will be very concerned about. They will be concerned about the way the State School Teachers' Union is discharging its affairs at this time and using their pay and conditions in this matter as a political football.