

Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations Directive: Remuneration for Certain Employees

Frequently asked questions

I am covered by the core agreement. What has been happening to settle the core agreement?

The Queensland Government and relevant unions have now reached an in-principle agreement in settlement of the State Government Departments Certified Agreement (core agreement).

Negotiations for the core agreement commenced in 2012 and were referred to arbitration in 2013. The arbitration has not concluded at this time.

However, in recognition of the significant time it has taken to settle the core agreement government has continued its negotiations with relevant unions and also provided wage increases by way of ministerial directives from December 2013.

The Queensland Government is pleased to announce this in-principle agreement—an important step in realising its goal to restore fairness within the public service.

What will my wage rise be?

The in-principle agreement between government and relevant unions consists of:

- a three-year agreement with an operative date of 1 September 2015 and a nominal expiry date of 31 August 2018
- increase to the wage rates as they were on 1 December 2014 of:
 - 2.5 per cent from 1 September 2015 (for employees employed at 1 December 2015)
 - 2.5 per cent from 1 September 2016
 - 2.5 per cent from 1 September 2017.
- upon certification of the agreement (**in 2016**), a one-off 'Section 831 payment' of \$1300 (subject to tax) for all employees covered by the replacement 2015 core agreement as at the date of its certification. Part-time employees will receive a pro rata payment.

When will my wage increase be paid to me?

As it will take some time for a ballot to be undertaken and the agreement to be certified, a ministerial directive has been made so that employees under the core agreement will receive the 2.5 per cent wage increase from 1 September 2015 as soon as possible. To be eligible for this payment employees must be covered by the core agreement on or after 1 December 2015.

The 'Section 831 payment' will only be paid upon certification of the agreement – **in 2016** – by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) – once a majority of employees vote to approve the core agreement.

Have other government employees settled agreements with the government?

All other agreements that expired in or around 2012 were settled during negotiations or by way of arbitration some time ago. More recently, other matters have been agreed in 2015 at 2.5 per cent per annum over three years.

Why is the wage increase 2.5 per cent?

The wage increase of 2.5 per cent is consistent with government's current wages policy. It is also consistent with the average of wages policies in the state and Commonwealth public services.

What is a 'Section 831 payment'? Why has it been made?

The 'Section 831 payment' is a special payment specific to employees covered by the core agreement in recognition of the 16 months in which no wage increase was paid. It is a one-off payment.

Section 831 is a discreet provision in the *Industrial Relations Act 1999* (IR Act) about arbitrations that had commenced prior to this government's legislative changes made to restore fairness to the Queensland public service. The core agreement is the only remaining matter which section 831 of the IR Act applies to.

Accordingly, a 'Section 831 payment' cannot be applied to employees outside of the core agreement. It can only be paid once and will not form part of future agreements or arbitrations.

Why will the wage increases take effect from 1 September 2015?

On 1 September each year, the QIRC releases the State Wage Case, increasing the rates of pay, and some allowances, for all safety net awards. This resulted in the minimum award rates of pay overtaking the core agreement rates.

Providing a 2.5 per cent wage increase from 1 September 2015 will ensure that the 2015 core agreement rates of pay remain above the award rates of pay for the three-year duration of the agreement

Will this in-principle agreement apply to TAFE employees?

The TAFE matter has been found to no longer be in arbitration and TAFE has decided to negotiate a separate enterprise agreement for its employees. No TAFE employees will be covered by the core agreement. However, TAFE will administratively apply the wage increases agreed in the core agreement to its employees until its own agreement is certified.