A union powered by its members

I am honoured to have been elected as the new general secretary of the SSTUWA and grateful for the trust members have placed in the new Executive team.

Union democracy matters. Every vote cast was a reminder that our strength comes not from titles or buildings, but from engaged, active members who believe in the collective.

While the role of general secretary is new to me, the union is not. I first joined the SSTUWA in 1984 when I began teaching manual arts at Northam Senior High School.

Like many members, I joined because I understood instinctively that standing together offered protection, voice and power that no individual could achieve alone. That belief has guided me throughout my working life.

Over the past 15 years, I have worked for the SSTUWA in a range of roles, including schools organiser, TAFE organiser, case manager, growth officer and as part of the AEU's *Fair Funding Now WA* campaign.

These roles took me into hundreds of schools, TAFEs and worksites across metropolitan, regional and remote Western Australia. I listened to members, supported branches and saw firsthand both the challenges educators face and the extraordinary commitment they bring to their work every day.

The SSTUWA covers one of the largest geographic jurisdictions of almost any union in the world. That presents unique challenges but it also presents opportunities.

The tyranny of distance cannot be an excuse for unequal support. Our task is to be smart, strategic and responsive in how we deliver services to members, wherever they work.

That means strengthening our presence on the ground, expanding industrial capacity and delivering high-quality training both online and locally in regional and remote areas.

A strong union is an educated union. When members understand their rights, responsibilities and the power of collective action, they are better equipped to resolve issues early and challenge injustice with confidence.

This is why trade union education and training formed a central part of our election commitments. Early intervention, skill-building at the workplace level and timely industrial support are essential to protecting members and improving outcomes.

Every workplace needs a voice and that voice begins with your branch. Branches are the foundation of our union. They feed into District Council, the Executive and ultimately State Council.

The office exists to serve members, not the other way around. The union is strongest when information flows freely, when issues are identified early and when members are empowered to participate meaningfully at every level.

Transparency and accountability are also central to my approach as general secretary. Members deserve to know that their union is careful, responsible and transparent with their money and resources. As membership grows and workplace issues become more complex, we must ensure our systems are robust, efficient and focused on delivering value to members.

Our two industrial agreements (SSTUWA Red Books) cover a broad range of roles across schools and TAFE, from pre-service teachers through to leadership, school psychologists, lecturers, education officers, swimming instructors and specialist positions.

Regardless of role, sector, or location, every member deserves strong representation and respect. We are all covered by the same agreements and we all benefit when we stand together.

This Executive has a clear mandate: to empower members, share knowledge and fight collectively for better conditions, respect and fairness across public education and training.

We will work collaboratively across all levels, from graduates to leadership, because solidarity is not selective.

Finally, I acknowledge and thank Mary Franklyn for her service to the union and wish her well in her retirement. I also wish Natalie Blewitt every success with her future endeavours. We build on the work of those who came before us and we do so with gratitude and determination.

The challenges facing public education and training are significant, but so too is the strength of our membership.

When members are informed, organised and united, there is very little we cannot achieve. Solidarity.



By Sally Dennis
General Secretary

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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