From commitment to action

Building power in 2026

In the last issue of *Western Teacher*, I spoke about leadership, service and collective strength. In this issue, I want to focus on what that means in practice.

As members of the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, we are entering a critical organising phase. Enterprise bargaining does not begin at the negotiating table. It begins in workplaces. It begins in staff rooms. It begins in conversations between colleagues about what must change and what we are prepared to stand together to win. If we are serious about securing improvements to workload, pay, permanency, class sizes and professional respect, then the preparation must start now.

Bargaining is about power, not paper

A Log of Claims is important. Drafting precise claims matters. Industrial strategy matters. But none of it succeeds without visible, organised member backing.

Governments and departments assess risk. They calculate whether members are engaged, whether branches are active and whether the union can mobilise. When membership is passive, bargaining outcomes are modest. When membership is organised and prepared to act collectively, outcomes improve.

The lesson is simple: participation determines leverage. Over the coming months, members will be asked to contribute to the development of claims. I strongly encourage every member to engage in that process. Attend meetings. Complete surveys. Put forward motions through your branch. Bargaining priorities must reflect the lived realities of educators across schools and TAFE.

Workload must be central

Across the system, workload remains the dominant issue. Administrative creep, data demands, compliance tasks, staff shortages and behavioural complexity are eroding the sustainability of the profession.

If we do not address workload structurally, recruitment and retention will continue to suffer. Bargaining must deliver enforceable protections not vague commitments or aspirational language. Clear limits. Clear processes. Clear accountability. This requires members to articulate specific pressure points in their workplaces. Evidence strengthens claims. Collective reporting strengthens evidence.

Branches: the engine room

Strong branches are not optional; they are essential infrastructure. An active branch ensures:

- New staff are recruited promptly.
- Members understand their rights.
- Workplace issues are escalated early.
- Union communication flows both ways.

If your branch is quiet, now is the time to rebuild it. Nominate for a role. Rotate responsibilities. Share the workload. No one should carry branch leadership alone. Where branches are strong, members feel supported. Where members feel supported, confidence grows. Where confidence grows, collective action becomes possible.

Training and industrial confidence

Industrial confidence does not appear overnight. It is developed through knowledge and preparation. Members are entitled to five days of union training each year. Use it. Whether you are a new teacher, an experienced TAFE lecturer, or a long-

standing branch representative, there is always more to learn about industrial law, bargaining processes, dispute resolution and organising strategy. A well-trained membership shifts the power dynamic in any workplace.

Solidarity beyond the workplace

Unionism is not limited to enterprise agreements. It is a broader commitment to fairness, equity and justice. That includes advancing women's leadership, supporting secure employment in TAFE and maintaining international solidarity with educators facing repression or conflict. When we act in solidarity, we reinforce the values that underpin public education: dignity, equity and collective responsibility.

The months ahead

Over the next issue and beyond, I will provide regular updates on bargaining preparation, branch development and industrial strategy. Transparency matters. Members deserve clarity about process and direction. But clarity alone is insufficient. Engagement is what transforms information into power.

The coming year will test our organisation. It will require discipline, unity and resilience. However, if we are organised at branch level, informed at member level and united across sectors, we will enter bargaining from a position of strength.

Collective outcomes are not accidental. They are built. Now is the time to build.



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