Respect for our profession

**Disclaimer: in this article the term teacher is used intermittently in reference to teachers and school leaders.*

How often do we hear that the need to fix the teacher shortage is to show teachers more respect?

But what does that actually mean? And even more so, what does it look like?

In SSTUWA's *State of our Schools survey* 2025, our members reported that they had experienced harassment from parental expectations and communications, social media comments, and inappropriate posts created by students about teachers, just to name a few examples. The survey also highlighted that approximately 70 per cent of teachers were considering leaving the profession due to a lack of respect, with a further 30 per cent due to safety concerns.

So, no wonder we find ourselves in a teacher shortage.

We know the landscape of teaching has changed and workload has increased exponentially. Our members reported that key to this was parental demands and also compliance requirements. The SSTUWA has been working with the Ministerial Workload Intensification Taskforce to alleviate workload pressures.

As we go back into bargaining this year, we know that key to our members' concerns will be their working conditions. If we don't have a place where teachers are respected and trusted, then we will continue to see an increase in teacher and school leader resignations. We know that on a day-to-day basis, teachers already experience work pressures and a high level of stress. The union is also aware that the continuous barraging of teachers in all aspects of their lives can impact their psychological health.

WorkSafe outlines this as a psychosocial hazard: *Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and work situations which can lead to psychological or physical harm. These stem from:*

- *The way the tasks or job are designed, organised, managed and supervised.*
- *Tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks.*
- *The equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments.*
- *Social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.*

At the June 2025 State Council Conference, Minister Winton said
"As a system, we need to look at how
else we can support principals and schools to deal with the barrage of complaints and destructive criticism coming their way."

SSTUWA President Matt Jarman also spoke about respect at the June 2025 State Council Conference, calling on people to:

- Respect the fact that teachers are not available outside working hours.
- Respect teachers on Facebook, WhatsApp groups and other social media channels.
- Respect teachers in front of your children.
- Respect the fact that it just might be that your children's behaviour is the issue, not the teacher's.

As your union I also encourage you to download our respect poster from sstuwa.org.au/RESPECT

In late 2024, the union raised concerns with the Department of Education (DoE) on disrespectful behaviours towards school staff.

The DoE agreed to review and strengthen the Connect and Respect resources for schools to use. The work of the SSTUWA has recently resulted in providing feedback for what can be improved in these resources.

The importance of these resources is support all in the school community and really encourage our parents and caregivers to respect the work of our teachers.

Every student, staff member, parent or carer has the right to feel safe and be safe in school and appropriate action will be taken to ensure all staff are safe.

The resources also include a document on what parents and carers can expect from schools and, more importantly, what they should not expect.

This document clearly outlines how communication can interfere with teaching and learning and also when to contact your child's school. Other resources include helping a principal escalate serious concerns and several letter templates that can be used by school leaders to address a range of issues.

While this is not the only solution to mitigate disrespectful behaviour, the SSTUWA believes that it is a step in the right direction.



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