The importance of respect and support

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Pictured: SSTUWA President Matt Jarman joined WA Premier Roger Cook together with Department of Education Director General Jay Peckitt, WA Minister for Education Hon Sabine Winton MLA and WACSSO President Pania Turner, in backing our Respect campaign to restore respect in schools.

Last year I spoke about respect for public educators and the teaching profession. We called for parental and community support to assist in restoring respect in schools.

This followed results from our 2025 State of Our Schools survey, which showed that 84 per cent of our members had considered quitting in the past four years. Over 5,000 had already left the teaching profession in the three years to 2023, and over 60 per cent of those were young teachers. The ones that were contemplating quitting said a lack of respect for the profession was a key reason, along with workload and burnout. As reported by the DoE, resignation remains at alarming levels.

Recent events at a southern public school serve as a reminder restoring respect is ongoing – but remains more critical than ever. It needs full parental engagement and support, as well as that from the government, to ensure that our public educators are protected and respected. We know the vast majority of parents support teachers and school leaders. But there are a growing number who don't choose to interact with teachers politely or rationally and even resort to abuse or violence.

The 2025 Australian principal wellbeing survey revealed 47.8 per cent of school leaders reported acts of physical violence against them, while 53.7 per cent also reported threats of violence, which came mostly from parents. More than half (54.4 per cent) stated they were seriously considering resigning from their roles.

No level of frustration justifies verbally or physically attacking a teacher or a school leader. Our young people are influenced by the behaviour that they see in adults, so adults must strive to uphold greater levels of respect for their children's teachers

and school leaders. We need a united community effort to bring respect back into schools. We have already started the process ourselves through our Respect posters, which can be downloaded here.

Members, please print the Respect posters at work and post them in every public area of your school. Let's spread the message that respect is vital in starting to improve behaviour in schools.

The Premier of WA, Roger Cook has now joined the Education Minister Sabine Winton and Department of Education Director General Jay Peckitt in endorsing SSTUWA posters and our ongoing campaign (please see our social media channels for more).

Parents, you can play your role by engaging with teachers respectfully and:

- Respect the fact that teachers are not available outside working hours.
- Respect teachers on 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.
- Use the correct school and regional channels to discuss your concerns or feedback.

If you see others who are not showing respect, please quietly call it out. Doing so can make a big impact to a teacher's day and can have a long-term impact on public education for all our students, not just your own.

Simply modelling acts of kindness to others in front of students and children is very powerful.

Respect is one simple and effective way to help boost teacher morale and retain experienced staff. If we can foster respect then it will, over time, improve behaviour. It will reduce violence and will lead to better outcomes for students, parents and teachers alike. Respect is only one part of the solution and goes hand-in-hand with the importance of parental engagement and support for teachers and the school.

No matter what changes there may be in education, there is no substitute for the relationship between the teacher and the student. Teachers and school leaders make a critical contribution to a community and for this, they should never be disrespected.

AEU Schools For Our Future

At time of print, the Australian Education Union brought its Australia-first national inquiry into public school infrastructure to Perth, focusing on how targeted investment could deliver world-class learning environments for every Western Australian student.

The AEU met with public educators, school leaders, families, government and community organisations through meetings and school visits. The inquiry team saw brand new schools and examples of the 50 per cent of our public schools which are more than 50 years or older. You can still have your say by making a submission to the inquiry here.

The closing date for submissions is 30 June. Read more about the inquiry in this issue of *Western Teacher* here.



By Matt Jarman
President

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