Health and wellbeing is union business

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2024) findings of teachers and school leaders was released in October last year and the Australian results would be unsurprising to SSTUWA members.

With regards to workload stress, TALIS 2024 reported that approximately 70 per cent of it was caused due to administrative work, 50 per cent due to marking and 46 per cent based on the changing demands of curriculum/programme updates.

The time spent on administrative tasks for full-time teachers has not changed since 2018, with teachers doing on average 4.7 hours a week, 1.7 hours more than the OECD average. In addition, 46 per cent of teachers felt that too many new initiatives were introduced at their school (higher than the OECD average of 31 per cent), whilst 59 per cent preferred a period of stability before new changes are introduced (OECD average: 44 per cent); and 41 per cent report being asked to implement changes without the necessary resources (OECD average: 31 per cent).

The findings also indicated that teachers under the age of 30 were more likely to feel stressed than their older colleagues. When considering job satisfaction and retention, 84 per cent had job satisfaction (OECD average: 89 per cent). This figure has decreased by six per cent since 2018. There was a trend of teachers in the private sector being more satisfied with their jobs than those in public sectors. Yet again, almost 20 per cent of teachers under the age of 30 expressed an interest in leaving the profession in the next five years; seven per cent higher than 2018.

The report also found that while teachers in Australia taught on average 20.1 hours; which was less than other OECD countries, the working hours were higher than the OECD average, as well as that of their lesson planning and marking.

Interestingly the survey also focused on the use on artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning. Seventy-five per cent of teachers reported that they did not have the adequate knowledge and skills to teach using AI, which was similar to other OECD countries. Furthermore, 25 per cent of teachers felt their schools lacked the infrastructure to use AI, (OECD average: 37 per cent). Had this survey been conducted of only public schools, the SSTUWA is of the view that this percentage would be higher.

While the findings presented focused heavily on teachers, the SSTUWA knows that our school leader members can also attest to the growing workload demands placed on them daily.

A recent SSTUWA survey found that 90 per cent of school leaders reported that their work-related stress levels were either high or very high. Main workload issues included mental health challenges of staff and students, compliance requirements, student behaviour, lack of relief staff and parental demands. The survey also revealed that the key contributors to members considering leaving the profession included workload, burnout and personal health and wellbeing concerns.

These workplace hazards are not new; and our members know that workplace health and safety goes beyond physical hazards – it now includes psychosocial hazards.

Section four of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WHS Act)* defines health as meaning physical and psychological health. That means any provision of the *WHS Act* that refers to "health" includes psychological health. Some of the more common psychosocial hazards that arise at work include poor workplace relationships, poor support, violence and aggression, lack of role clarity, poor organisational change management, various forms of harassment, bullying, stress and burnout.

The union has been supporting school members in a number of ways:

- Raising the matter with relevant line managers to address concerns.
- Resolving low level one-off incidences via mediation.
- Discuss with Member Assist and organisers if relevant clauses from the General Agreement or Award can be applied.
- Strategies to implement own control measures.

At any point, members are entitled to use the Department of Education's Psychological Hazard or Incident Report (PHIR)

form to report an incident. The union believes that the forms should be used when experiencing extreme one-off behaviours; sustained patterns of inappropriate behaviours or issues or incidences of workplace violence and aggression that impacts your mental wellbeing.

Members can contact the SSTUWA for advice when considering a PHIR form. The union has supported members and branches who have either lodged PHIR forms or reported high risk psychosocial hazards.

It is the right of our members to feel safe and supported in their workplace and the union is here to support you.



By Sharmila Nagar
Vice President

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026