Disruption looming if teachers forced to take long service leave



The State Schools Teachers' Union has warned of major disruption to the start of the 2017 school year if the Education Department implements a threat to direct teachers with accrued long service leave to take it from the start of next year.

A memo went out to all schools in March this year directing principals to ensure all teachers cleared their long service leave by the end of the year unless the principal was able to demonstrate that the quality of service delivery would be affected.

Schools were told in the memo that if staff did not clear their leave, they could be directed to do so from a date determined by the Director General. The Department has since informed some principals this date will be day one, Term 1, 2017.

SSTUWA President Pat Byrne said an audit in February showed there were about 12,600 staff holding long service leave entitlements and potentially subject to this directive.

"To expect so many staff to clear their long service leave by the end of this year is simply not possible," she said.

"We have now been informed that any teacher who has not taken their leave by the end of the year may be directed to take it from day one of term one next year.

"If the State Government insists on enforcing this directive, there will be an enormous number of classes with no teacher at the start of the school year, particularly in hard to staff locations.

"To expect principals to make a formal "business case" to the department on behalf of every teacher with accrued leave in a school imposes an onerous additional workload on them.

"Effectively, they are being asked to solve a problem which has been twenty years in the making and teachers are having their leave plans disrupted."

Ms Byrne said it was not possible for schools to run normally if even half the number of teachers who had accrued leave were directed to take it.

"Obviously if you take that many teachers out of the system, the running of our schools will be severely affected and student learning will be disrupted," she said.

Ms Byrne said the SSTUWA was calling on the government to show some common sense and abandon the directive.

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