Blaming staff for violence in schools unfair



The State School Teachers' Union of WA has pledged to work cooperatively on positive solutions to address student violence, but has warned that blaming teachers is unfair, superficial and will not solve the underlying causes of poor student behavior.

Responding to coverage of a report into violence at Kalgoorlie-Boulder Community High School, SSTUWA President Pat Byrne said teachers needed government and community support, not further criticism.

"Teachers are already on the front line when violence occurs – to then read reports suggesting they are to blame further reduces morale, undermines teachers in the eyes of the community and makes the situation worse," said Ms Byrne.

"What is needed is a cooperative approach from the Department of Education, staff and external agencies which recognises the true underlying causes of this unacceptable behaviour, rather than targeting school staff."

Ms Byrne said the SSTUWA would be seeking practical assistance for staff.

"Where there is a relatively high staff turnover it is necessary for appropriate professional learning around student behavior to be provided regularly – not just on a one-off basis," she said.

"The same goes for strategies aimed at ensuring consistency of practice – they need to be embedded in day to day practice and this takes proper and ongoing resourcing.

"We need proper support to assist students in addressing their behaviour issues appropriately.

"We need to ensure the implementation of programs that engage at-risk students.

"Above all, teachers and students need to be able to do that in safe working and learning environments."

Ms Byrne added that the issue of increasing violence could not be addressed in schools alone.

"This is a community-wide issue. Many young people lack parental support and this comes through in their behavior at school," she said.

"The community as a whole needs to be addressing these issues, not expecting schools and teachers to do it alone."

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