Survey reveals extent of schools' reliance on voluntary charges



A survey of almost 3,000 WA public school teachers and principals has revealed the extent of schools' reliance on voluntary charges to deliver programs.

The survey found 60% of teachers and principals believed voluntary contributions and school fundraising were either 'important' or 'very important' to ensure schools could offer the education programs students needed. Read the survey report here.

State School Teachers' Union president Pat Byrne revealed some respondents said the charges were even used to pay teaching staff.

"Voluntary charges were originally intended to be used for extras around the school, such as additional sporting equipment or attendance at school camps," she said.

"However, this survey shows that public schools are increasingly relying on fundraising to meet their basic needs.

"The charges were never intended to pay for vital education programs or staff, but some schools are finding this is the only way to cover costs, which are increasing as more and more responsibilities are pushed onto schools.

"The survey also found that teachers and principals believed P&C fundraising was vital to their schools, although many pointed out the funding should come from the government."

WA Council of State School Organisations president Kylie Catto said without P&Cs, many schools could not afford some of the programs and resources they were currently providing.

"It is the State Government's responsibility to fund education to a level that mitigates the need for parental fees, charges and contributions," she said.

"In 2015, WACSSO ran a survey that revealed the significant and increasing level of financial support P&Cs provided to schools, in addition to the time commitments – which averaged 70.5 hours per week per school.

"This added up to more than 1.8 million hours a year donated by P&C volunteers to public schools.

"We also found P&Cs are being increasingly relied on to fund items historically paid for by government, such as basic

learning resources, ICT, outdoor shade provision and even furniture and general maintenance.

“More funding needs to be made available in order to cover core learning activities and outstanding maintenance, so that P&C funding can be utilised effectively in other areas.”

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