Further increases in government housing rents to hit regional schools hard



The challenge of attracting and retaining staff in Western Australia's regional schools is set to worsen as rents on government housing increase for the second time in less than 12 months.

Regional teachers, school leaders and TAFE lecturers have been notified by the Department of Education of a further $60 per fortnight rent increase for their government housing, meaning from 27 July they will be paying up to an extra $120 per fortnight since the same time last year.

Whilst some state government agencies have chosen not to introduce any rent increases in recent years, the Department of Education has chosen to pass on the maximum annual rent increase of $30 per week to its employees.

SSTUWA President Pat Byrne called on Education Minister Sue Ellery to intervene.

"How can the State Government justify a massive increase in the rents it charges, when the pay rise teachers will receive under the new public sector wages policy falls well and truly short of this additional rental cost?

"We understand that the new State Government has inherited a budget seriously in the red, but at a time when property prices and private rents are falling across the State, another massive increase in rent just can't be justified," said Ms Byrne.

Ms Byrne said the rent increase was a kick in the teeth to regional communities, and would be another major disincentive for attracting and retaining staff to regional schools.

"What effect does the State Government think a massive and immediate increase in the cost of living for teachers in regional WA will have on the ability to retain and attract teachers to regional schools?

"School Leaders have raised serious concerns with us about the challenges schools are already facing in attracting and retaining staff in regional areas.

"This second rent increase will only exacerbate the issues that we've seen as a result of changes to the transfer system for teachers who take country posts, and then face difficulties in returning to metropolitan schools caused by the selection processes in the Independent Public Schools system.

“If Ms Ellery cares about the quality of education in regional WA, she will intervene and ensure these rent increases are reversed.

“All children deserve a quality education, no matter where in Western Australia they live.”

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