Cuts to 800 jobs to devastate public school system



The state government’s targeted voluntary separation scheme will have a devastating effect on the state’s public school system, according to the State School Teachers' Union of WA (SSTUWA) and the Community Public Sector Union/ Civil Service Association (CPSU/CSA) who represent teachers and support staff.

SSTUWA President Pat Byrne said 800 positions have been cut from the Department of Education’s budget, to be taken from across a small group of 1,200 non-school based people who currently fill these roles.

The state government's voluntary separation scheme will see 3,000 jobs targeted across the public sector, with the Department of Education, which makes up 26 per cent of the public sector, set to lose 800 jobs as part of the scheme.

“These 800 job losses will come entirely from staff who play a vital support role to principals and teachers,” Ms Byrne said.

“Despite the Department of Education quarantining school-based personnel from the scheme, the support staff being targeted still play a critical support role to frontline educators. This cut will decimate the department’s school support services, central and regional offices, the Institute of Professional Learning - and have a serious impact upon WA schools.

“Cuts to staff numbers of this magnitude are unfairly disproportionate, and simply unsustainable. These moves will directly impact upon frontline schooling with principals and teachers being unable to access the support they need."

CPSU/CSA Branch Secretary Toni Walkington said these cuts fly in the face of the government’s ‘WA Jobs’ catchphrase, and will adversely affect the education our young people.

“This is a body blow for WA’s education system and extremely disappointing from a government elected on a jobs platform.

“We already know that employees engaged on contract providing important services will be gone at the end of this year, raising serious questions about how services to schools will be delivered once the redundancy process is completed.

“The targeted staff provide a range of valued services for principals, teachers and students such as professional learning, support for students with special needs and for teachers and schools dealing with severe behavior issues,” she said.

“To say we are disappointed is an understatement. We are outraged. The massive cuts to public sector staff providing valuable services to West Australians doesn’t make sense, for service delivery or for the WA economy.

“Further we estimate that the reduction in headcount across the sector will reduce consumer spending in the WA economy by approximately $175 million per year. That’s a heavy price for small local businesses."

Ms Byrne said, “To call this process ‘voluntary’ is simply dishonest. The fact that Treasury takes the full 800 salaries from the education budget means that even if 200 people choose to take the separation package, 600 people will be forced into unemployment.

“We call on the state government to reverse the directive to preemptively deduct funding from the department’s budget,” Ms Byrne concluded.

Read the official media release here.

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