WA teachers seek pay rise and support as workload pressure soars

30 July 2019

- **91.4 per cent of teachers/ school leaders said administrative tasks had increased**
- **90.2 per cent said the complexity of work had increased**
- **89.7 per cent said the collection, analysis and reporting of data had increased**
- **Average working week for a teacher is now 50 hours**
- **Teachers to vote on two per cent pay increase for the first year, followed by 2.5 per cent and three per cent if the agreement extends into a third year.**

The State School Teachers' Union of WA (SSTUWA) is seeking membership support for a new EBA claim as workload pressure drives teachers out of the profession and stops them applying for leadership positions.

SSTUWA State Council endorsed the draft wages claim of two per cent for the first year, followed by 2.5 per cent and three per cent if the agreement extends into a third year. All claims are above the state government's $1,000 a year wage policy.

Such pay rises would be consistent with the national and state minimum wage increase of three per cent and 2.75 per cent respectively.

It comes as a new survey conducted by Curtin University on behalf of SSTUWA found that WA teachers and school leaders are now working longer hours and have less time to devote to student welfare and behaviour.

The Understanding Work in WA Public Schools survey discovered teachers and school leaders were working an average of 50 hours a week at school and at home to keep up with the demand in extra red tape and yet still provide quality education to students.

Almost all respondents (91.4 per cent) said administrative tasks had increased.At the same time support staff numbers within the Education Department have been slashed, leaving teachers and school leaders to pick up the work they were doing.

SSTUWA President Pat Byrne said, "The overall sentiment of this survey shows teachers and school leaders are working long hours just to keep up with the curricular and administrative demands required of them."

"Teachers are passionate people and to ensure students learning doesn't suffer they will put in the hours at home to keep up with the administrative side. This is not sustainable in the long term, we are seeing teachers and school leaders, in the middle of the school year, who are exhausted.

"This is particularly shocking given that many tasks are seen by both principals and teachers as being an exercise in compliance rather than focussed on the needs of students.

"Student learning and welfare will ultimately suffer as fewer people opt for teaching as a long-term profession.

"The Log of Claims endorsed by State Council seeks to tackle teacher burnout and fears over more funding cuts in WA public schools.

"Teachers are avoiding seeking leadership positions as diminishing salaries, massive workload and a lack of support erode morale.

"We are seeing long delays in recruitment for leadership positions and often people who are inadequately prepared for what awaits them are being appointed to fill the gaps.

"The SSTUWA believes the state government's position on wages is untenable. Public servants across the board have

borne the brunt of budget repair in WA to date' with the previous agreement delivering between 1.46 per cent and 0.6 per cent per annum for our members.

"At the same time, we have seen large increases in utilities' costs, public transport, some GROH rents and TRBWA charges.

"Teachers deserve a reasonable pay increase otherwise we are going to see more leaving this profession at a time when we are already struggling to staff regional schools," Ms Byrne said.

Teachers and School Leaders in this survey are telling us that they need:

- More specialist teacher support for students with special needs.
- More preparation time to enable better collaboration with peers, as well as adequate time for planning, marking and reporting.
- Greater curriculum support.
- Better system level planning and consultation to prevent the imposition of competing workload demands and unrealistic timeframes.
- Alternative settings for students with behavioural issues.
- An increase in professional learning and development opportunities for principals and teachers to support collaboration in and across workplaces.

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