Treasury to cut up to $300 million from education budget



The State Government's 'public sector renewal' policy will force the Education Department to cut up to $300 million from its budget over the next 4 years, according to the State School Teachers' Union of WA.

The policy dictates that for each 'frontline' staff member who retires or resigns, the salary budget will be cut by 10%, while the salary budget for other staff members in schools such as Education Assistants, cleaners and gardeners will be cut by 40%.

SSTUWA President Pat Byrne said this amounted to an estimated $250 - $300 million cut over a 4 year period.

Ms Byrne said about 1000 teachers left the education system every year.

"If the salary budget will only fund 90% of the cost of their wages, it equates to an effective staff cut of 100 teachers per year," she said.

"Teachers' wages are set in the General Agreement, so you can't actually pay people 10% less.

"If the government will only fund wages up to 90%, this equates to approximately $10.5 million per year for teaching positions, which will have to be cut from school salary budgets across the board.

"As well as teaching positions, this will affect EAs, cleaners and gardeners. The salary budget for these positions will be cut by 40% every time a person resigns.

"The only possible consequence of this will be to cut hours of employment. This will have a very negative effect on schools."

Ms Byrne said unions had not yet calculated the numbers of non-teaching positions which would be lost as a result of the strategy.

"The rates of resignation among cleaning staff, for example, are much higher than for teachers," she said.

"This makes it difficult to calculate exactly how much money will be stripped from school budgets."

Ms Byrne accused the government of continuing its attack on public education.

“Schools are already struggling under the weight of the almost $200 million in cuts the government made in 2013,” she said.

“They simply cannot sustain more cuts to staffing, particularly of the size we are talking about with this policy.

“This equates to a cut greater than all of the cuts we have seen so far. It is outrageous.”

Ms Byrne said the education cuts had already resulted in class sizes increasing, teachers having less support in the classroom, programs being cut and shortages of equipment.

“To cut even more from the education budget is simply treating public schools with contempt,” she said.

“The magnitude of these proposed cuts is almost incomprehensible in terms of the effect it will have on schools.”

Ms Byrne said the SSTUWA was calling on the government to rethink its strategy.

Read More Here: WA Education Minister Peter Collier refuses to rule out budget cuts, says state has nation's highest per student funding

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