Overseas students in state system



While international fee paying students may well already be paying for places in WA public schools, this announcement simply exacerbates what is already an undermining of public education in WA.

As the Minister herself has said, this program is limited to Chinese students because China is a key WA market for international education. It appears that the McGowan government is intent on establishing a pipeline to supply this market and is using the public system to do so.

The SSTUWA will be seeking details from the department as to how it intends to ensure that local intake students for these schools as well as local students seeking places in selective classes are prioritised ahead of overseas students. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the very presence of a cohort of overseas students in these schools means that a local cohort is being denied entry.

Given the costs which these students will be expected to pay there is a strong possibility that schools will be tempted to choose students according to the income they bring with them. This would result in local students being denied opportunities which might otherwise have been available to them and is contrary to the purpose of a universal, public system which should be available to all.

While initially being limited to five students per school, there is no doubt that this will soon be extended as pressure from Chinese parents and the benefitting schools increases.

The SSTUWA has grave concerns that programs of this kind will, over time, contribute to an over-reliance on fee paying international students at the expense of Australian students, as well as fundamentally compromising the values underpinning public education. This is another form of privatisation by stealth.

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