SSTUWA calls for increased commitment to public education ahead of election


Why State

PAT BYRNE

500 more teachers tops union wish list

EXCLUSIVE BETHANY HIATT

Adding another 500 teachers to provide more individual attention for children is top of the pre-election wish

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Media release

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The State School Teachers' Union of WA has called for an increased commitment to public education in the lead up to the state election, including employing 500 extra teachers over four years.

The union said COVID-19 had highlighted areas of need in the public education system which had to be addressed.

SSTUWA president Pat Byrne said children should be at the heart of both COVID recovery and preparedness.

"We're asking the major political parties to put our kids first and ensure WA's public school students are supported in recovering from the effects of COVID in 2020 and prepared for any potential future disruption," she said.

The SSTUWA has released five key asks of the major political parties ahead of the March election. They include:

- Employing 500 additional teachers so children can be given individual attention and schools have the resources they need if future lockdowns are required.
- Ensuring every school has fast broadband, modern IT and the devices necessary to enable both face to face and at-home learning.
- Providing additional mental health services and counsellors, including 100 FTE psychologists.
- Providing additional resources to help teachers deal with extreme student behavioural problems, violence and mental health issues.
- Ending salary caps so that public schools can attract and retain the best teachers.

Ms Byrne said employing more teachers, in addition to the workforce growth currently forecast by the Department of Education, would help to ensure students were given more individual attention.

"Additional resourcing is needed to assist children to overcome any disruption caused by COVID, particularly those needing extra help from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may not have had access to the necessary IT," she said.

"We also have concerns about class sizes, given that the increase in student enrolments has far outstripped the growth in school staffing.

“Far more classes are at maximum capacity which reduces the teacher’s ability to cater for the specific needs of each student.

“Employing more teachers would ensure students aren’t disadvantaged.”

Ms Byrne said all of the initiatives sought by the union could be paid for if the state agreed to fund 100 per cent of the standard cost of educating a child.

“WA’s public school funding is being cut to 95% of the average cost of educating a child, as defined by the Federal Government’s Schooling Resource Standard, making it the only state government which is cutting its share of funding. Schools have no way of making up this shortfall in funding themselves,” she said.

“We are calling on the major parties to commit to increasing funding to 100 per cent, which we estimate would be more than enough to fully fund the initiatives in our plan.”

More information can be found at: www.puttingourkidsfirst.com.au

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