Teachers' union launches campaign calling for end to wages cap

SSTUWA
State School Teachers' Union of WA

PUTTING OUR KIDS FIRST

The State School Teachers' Union has today launched a campaign calling for an end to the cap on wages for public school teachers and lecturers.

The union said that as the economy heats up and skills shortages emerge, stagnant wages would inevitably mean teachers and lecturers would be lured out of education into the private sector.

Teachers, and other public sector workers, have reluctantly accepted the government's wages policy for the past four years, which kept salary increases to $1,000 a year to relieve pressure on the state budget.

But SSTUWA president Pat Byrne said with the budget in good shape and a multi-billion dollar surplus forecast, things had changed, and the policy should too.

"We are very concerned that if public sector wages don't keep up with the increases expected in the private sector, we will lose teachers and lecturers at a time when we can least afford it," she said.

"We are already seeing early signs of a teacher shortage with a lack of relief teachers and 60% fewer students studying teaching as a postgraduate degree. If we lose teachers to the private sector on top of this, it's going to make the situation significantly worse.

"Fewer teachers means less individual attention and support for students which can lead to poorer educational outcomes. This in turn means businesses and the community are deprived of necessary skills.

"For TAFE lecturers who are qualified tradespeople, the risk of losing them to the private sector is high, given the acute skills shortages in a range of industries.

"To keep teaching and lecturing staff, we need to pay them properly; this means an end to the wages cap and a return to genuine collective bargaining."

Ms Byrne said WA needed to educate, train and upskill local workers rather than looking overseas.

"To ensure we have a highly skilled workforce, we need to invest in our public schools and TAFEs," she said.

"But instead, the State Government is actually decreasing the minimum amount of funding per child, with only 95% of the cost of educating a child to secondary school graduation level being covered."

The General Agreement covering teachers' wages is due to expire in December.

The campaign will include TV, radio, print and digital advertising.

For more information on the campaign, go to: www.puttingourkidsfirst.com.au

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