

From the President



By Pat Byrne
President

A 0.63 per cent cut in per student funding for primary school students and a 0.09 per cent increase per student for secondary schools students adds up to a budget that puts our kids last.

Across schools and TAFEs the state government has funded buildings but has done nothing for the people who learn and work in them.

The state government has brought forward a review of wages policy, originally scheduled to take place in early 2023, to commence immediately with a view to a new policy applying from early in 2022.

While this is positive in that the government has acknowledged the inadequacy of maintaining the \$1,000 cap, this announcement lacks any detail.

If as the government's own words state, the 1.75 per cent increase provided for across the overall budget, is "in line with inflation", then that indicates what its position is going to be in any review of wages policy.

That is not an amount which will satisfy educators; we continue to get all the other increases in living costs – in rent, fuel and essentials.

Certainly, the pledged review is a win for the Public Sector Alliance that has gathered together to fight the salary cap; but it is a first step only.

We need all members to get behind our Give the Cap the Boot campaign. Put up the posters sent out with Western Teacher, urge your colleagues to join the SSTUWA and join us on the journey to win back the right for a properly negotiated salary increase.

The current wages policy, even with a review, combined with being the only state to effectively cut its proportion of public education funding against the School Resourcing Standard (SRS) means that WA schools and children see no benefit from this budget.

In 2022 every single student in public education in WA will be funded by an average of \$1,100 less than the minimum amount required. To put that in perspective, a school with 2,000 students will be \$2.2 million under the minimum level required by the SRS.

There is no additional funding to cater for the increased numbers of students with complex needs – mental and physical health, learning difficulties, behavioural issues, for example; if schools wish to do something additional for these students, it will be have to be at the expense of other programs they are running.

Public education is already being threatened by the increasing teacher shortage. The failure of the government to address the issue of GROH (Government Regional Officer Housing) will make existing regional shortages worse.

Losing more colleagues will add to the workloads of individual teachers and leaders, as well as ensuring that the disruption to children's education caused by this will continue.

In TAFE there is a brain drain of experienced lecturers leaving stressed and under-resourced workplaces for better pay in the private sector while, at the same time, enrolments are rocketing.

The maintenance of TAFE fees and additional funding for infrastructure is welcome; however, it is not matched by funding to ensure that there will be adequate numbers of lecturers to deliver the programs.

There is already a shortage in electrical, engineering, aged care and childcare subjects, to name but a few.

Failure to address workload issues, as well as wages, will see lecturers leaving TAFE, which will undermine the

government's own strategy for addressing skill shortages.

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