Time to boot the cap on salaries

By Mary Franklyn
General Secretary

The state government decided that public servants should bear the brunt of budget repair and put a cap on salaries. Initially this was for four years, then they extended it to six years.

It was, to say the least, somewhat galling that the extension of the public sector pay cap came at the very time when public servants across the state were keeping Western Australia safe from COVID-19.

TAFE staff are at the very heart of the crucial efforts to address a skills shortage in WA which we must overcome if our economy is to avoid stalling for the lack of qualified workers.

The Education Minister herself declared teachers were essential to keeping the state's economy going by keeping schools open.

Not essential enough though, it seems, to have the right to negotiate a fair salary increase rather than having it imposed on them.

Now we have teachers, TAFE lecturers and other public servants falling further and further behind the cost of living, getting salary increases of between 1.39 per cent and 0.58 per cent while they watch the cost of housing, fuel and electricity spiral upwards.

We have teachers in regional and remote areas dumped into caravan parks or share houses because they cannot get GROH and cannot come close to paying for private rentals.

In the metropolitan area a teacher or lecturer travelling by car has seen their fuel costs go through the roof and their rents soar – these are the real day-to-day

effects you see when the CPI average for WA is 3.8 per cent.

The SSTUWA has made giving the salary cap the boot a priority. We have joined the Public Sector Alliance with eight fellow public service unions. The alliance unions are committed to breaking the patterned wage policy freezing being adopted by this government.

We all know it is not about COVID-19 or any budget deficit. We all know we have to lead the struggle for fair wages and conditions – not a model that works on minimums and short-term political fixes.

The alliance will be working with our community and all political parties to establish the fair principles of the employees' right to fair and just negotiations on wages and conditions.

We are fighting to Give the Cap the Boot and we need your help. All of you. Our schools and TAFE campaigns are off and running.

If you are a member we need you to sign our petition either in hard copy or online by visiting bit.ly/3xXfpVO

We need you to put up our posters (enclosed with this Western Teacher) and make sure everyone in your school knows what an impact the cap is having on you and your colleagues.

You'll soon be able to share the Give the Cap the Boot message with what you wear and what you put on your noticeboards, in your classrooms and staff rooms.

What if you are not a member? Join now.

Every voice matters, every member matters.

Don’t be a bystander, be part of the change.

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