State Council rounds out big year

November State Council Conference has capped off a year of intense union activity which has included the launch of an independent review into public education in WA, the registering of two General Agreements and the start of the process for a next Log of Claims.

The conference, which also serves as the SSTUWA's highest decision-making body, was held once again at the Hyatt Hotel in the city to accommodate another large cohort of delegates.

Over two days delegates discussed and voted on motions relating to union activities, while receiving professional development and hearing from keynote speaker AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe and the panel comprising the SSTUWA's public education review.

Ms Haythorpe said the election of a new federal government brought hope for public education but campaign objectives, such as full funding for public schools, were far from being achieved.

"While we have a commitment from Labor to the 'promise of a pathway' to ensure this funding is restored, what we don't have yet is a detailed timelime for that funding to be restored," she said.

"Negotiations between the federal government and the state and territories governments on a new five-year public funding school agreement are due to begin at the end of this year and will take place across next year.

"The next 12 months are going to be critical; we have to really keep the campaign alive."

SSTUWA President Pat Byrne said the union's review into public education was a big opportunity for the WA community, including educators, to have its say on the state of public education for the past decade.

"This will be a review tasked with delivering workable solutions," she said. "The public system educates two-thirds of children across Australia and those children deserve the very best from our elected leaders – a strong, viable and quality system.

"There is a very strong sense of that mission having faltered in recent years, that the voice of teachers and principals has been lost with the imposition of business and market models of education.

"It's really important that union members have a very strong say in this review."

November State Council Conference was the last to be presided over by union president Pat Byrne, who will step down from the position at the end of this year.

Ms Byrne has been the SSTUWA president since 2014 in this stint – her second as the union president. She also served in the role from 2000-2003.

Delegates showed their appreciation of Pat's commitment to unionism and the SSTUWA with a special celebratory toast and tribute from Ms Haythorpe.

"Pat has been an outstanding leader for public education, a dedicated and committed fighter, someone who has done this with a very calm dignity," she said.

At time of press an election for the new SSTUWA president, senior officers and Executive Committee was underway.

Also at State Council Conference, South Kalgoorlie Primary School teacher Amanda Sambo was named as the 2022 recipient of the SSTUWA Reconciliation in Action award.

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