Your voice crucial on Log of Claims

By Mary Franklyn General Secretary

As you read this article materials will have arrived at your workplace to assist your involvement in discussing the SSTUWA's Log of Claims.

The feedback the union has received via the State of our Schools survey (see pages 8 and 9) leave us in no doubt that this is a crucial round of negotiations.

Workload, salaries and pressures associated with COVID-19 are causing great stress to members and we need to address these crucial issues. Our campaign (see page 5) around removing the state government's salary cap, as well as raising awareness of the dangerous situation regarding recurrent funding of public schools is interlinked with the Log of Claims.

You will see some very detailed explanation of what we are seeking, as developed through discussions at the June State Council, which authorised this draft Log of Claims to be sent to branches for endorsement.

This Log focuses on a combination of matters which are cost neutral and those which will incur additional expenditure from government. It aims at improving existing conditions, providing greater system support, and improving attraction and retention incentives, as well as a number of general matters.

There will be NO trade-offs or any diminution of conditions and entitlements.

Your voice is crucial. We encourage everyone to have their say. If you are not already a member of the SSTUWA then complaining later will be of no use. Join now to have your voice heard. It is arguably the most important set of negotiations the union has entered into. Our voice needs to be as strong as possible.

At the federal level the Morrison Government has made clear its disdain for public education at every level, from pre- school through TAFE and university.

In state terms this round of enterprise bargaining follows the negotiation of two, two-year Agreements in which pay increases were a flat $1,000 per annum for each person covered by the General Agreement, as per the WA state government wages policy.

In addition, the 2019 General Agreement and updated Award included a number of cost-neutral changes as well as amendments requiring additional government expenditure.

The state government public sector wages policy is only minimally changed from that which applied to the 2019 General Agreement: $1,000 per year for the first two years of a state Labor government with the possibility of consumer price index rises for the next two years of government – subject to the outcome of an economic review.

State Council delegates in November 2020 resolved to reject government wages policy for the purposes of negotiating the 2021 General Agreement.

Given this, the SSTUWA has joined other WA public sector unions in a new alliance to work to reform the wage capping policy. The cap to increases means a decline in real terms for six years for the vast majority of those we rely on to deliver education, essential health, community safety and other services.

For teachers and school leaders the existing wages policy fails to keep pace with the government's own policy on government fees and charges, announced to increase by 1.6 per cent overall. A capped $1,000 wage increase would mean rises of between 1.39 and 0.58 per cent for employees covered by this Agreement*.

A well-resourced and successful public sector is an important source of opportunity and growth, particularly during pandemic recovery; within that sector, the provision of quality public education ensures a future workforce able to thrive in a changing environment.

This Log of Claims includes a number of features for school leaders, including administrative time allocations, reduction of

administration and compliance requirements, compensatory leave for principals, professional learning, assistance with data analysis by way of a newly created position, increased flexibility in staff placement including a guaranteed return pathway from country to metropolitan schools, and recruitment support within the IPS context. Features for directors include compensatory leave, regional housing subsidies, government vehicles/allowances and right of return entitlements.

Summary

This Log of Claims puts “fair and proper” worker salary negotiations front and centre. We are not accepting wage capping/freezing. This Log has workload reduction and management solutions for all members. Our Log provides a comprehensive industrial and professional agenda to make working conditions better for all members and public education. I commend the delegates, Executive and staff for the work.

This needs to be on every staff meeting agenda. Be informed and be ready.

*Percentages relate to salary grades 2.1 and 6.4, respectively.

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