Respect vital for educators

By Mary Franklyn
General Secretary

Taking a break from wasting nearly $4 million of taxpayers money on incomprehensible consent videos that looked like they were scripted and filmed in the 1950s, Federal Education Minister Alan Tudge has announced yet another review into teacher education.

In his media release the Minister said one of the key aims was to find out how to attract and select high-quality candidates into the teaching profession.

Well, how about showing teachers some respect, funding their schools properly, reducing workload to manageable levels and paying people a salary that makes teaching an attractive career?

Mr Tudge doesn't need a review (yet more money down the drain), he can just come and talk to the teacher unions. In NSW, Queensland and here in WA unions have carried out extensive surveys and the answers are always the same – decent pay, action to reduce workloads, equitable funding and being safe at work.

Instead we have a schools and TAFE workforce burdened with ever more demands and fewer resources. The clear message we have been getting from members recently is what should be a rewarding and cherished career is becoming a sometimes dispiriting grind

There is little sense of a fresh start bounce. This should be a warning to employers and colleagues alike that people need to put health and well-being at the top of agendas. Less change, more care would be a sensible approach, especially as we have an 11-week term underway.

Look after yourselves and your colleagues. Be kind to each other.

Cyclone Seroja

There have also been a considerable range of issues around safety and health at workplaces where the cyclone caused damage. The SSTUWA's OSH organiser, Antony Pearson and district organiser, Sam Yates coordinated our response. The safety of members is a top priority for the union.

Membership

The SSTUWA is proud to see membership numbers steadily rising over the past year or so. We have some very active organisers out in the field working with union rep/ delegate teams at schools and TAFEs,

with a focus on growing membership and building our profile and capacity for positive change at the workplace.

In a year when yet another round of General Agreement negotiations gets underway – as well as campaigns around salaries – our voice must be strong and united.

Rep packs

Of course most crucial of all in attracting members is the work of our magnificent army of reps, deputy reps, women's contact officers and OSH reps.

In recent weeks rep packs have been arriving at schools, with union rep training also in full swing.

I offer my thanks to all the experienced reps who are again looking after their colleagues, especially new reps. Our work is impossible without you and the members who get involved at district and State Council levels.

The SSTUWA has established a fund to support members directly affected by Cyclone Seroja to ensure they get the support they need. Many members have seen their lives severely disrupted by the cyclone, with some being left homeless and others with severe damage to their properties. The SSTUWA will be doing all it can, along with the Department of Education and other agencies, to assist those people.

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