New education portfolios announcement welcomed

The State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia welcomed the announcement of a new Education Minister in December's cabinet reshuffle, with the division into separate ministerial portfolios of early childhood education and training suggesting the state government is giving education a higher priority.

Then SSTUWA President Pat Byrne said the union looked forward to working constructively with new Education Minister Tony Buti MLA, Simone McGurk MLA, who is taking on the training portfolio and Sabine Winton MLA who will be responsible for the new portfolio of early childhood education.

"Early childhood learning is absolutely vital and this focus on the subject is welcomed. Training, especially through the TAFE network is crucial to addressing the state's skill shortages and deserves significant attention," she said.

"It is very encouraging to see a Minister of Education appointed who has teaching experience and who went through the public education system and appreciates its value.

"In his maiden speech to parliament Minister Buti recognised and acknowledged many of the issues facing the teaching profession. We find common ground with his declaration in that speech that 'We need to better support our teachers and listen to their concerns as they are the classroom experts. We need to raise the societal standing of the teaching profession. This requires imaginative thinking and greater funding' and 'I cannot overemphasise the need to better support teachers and their assistants.'"

Ms Byrne said the SSTUWA looked forward to working with Ministers Buti, McGurk and Winton to address the wide range of challenges facing all three education sectors.

The SSTUWA also acknowledged the work done by outgoing Education Minister, Sue Ellery MLC.

"Minister Ellery introduced significant improvements to the way schools address the problem of violence,"
Ms Byrne said.

"Minister Ellery also oversaw major changes to access to TAFE courses that had long been urged by the SSTUWA through its pro-TAFE campaigns.

"With major change occurring in the education portfolio at both federal and state levels, SSTUWA welcomes the opportunity to work with both tiers of government in the interests of staff and students in public schools."

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