# School leader survey shows real concerns

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The latest results from the annual Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Well-being Survey are of great concern and highlight the strain school leaders are under as they struggle to manage the ever-increasing workloads, demands and expectations of their jobs.

More than 2,500 school leaders were involved in the 2022 iteration of the survey, which revealed a rising level of stress stemming from dealing with issues such as staffing shortages, health and well-being; student mental health issues; unreasonable workloads and community expectations of their role.

Rates of bullying, threats and actual incidents of violence were on the rise, too, and over half of the WA school leader participants are showing a risk of mental and physical burnout.



By Matt Jarman
President



The survey specifically found:

- More than half (55 per cent) of WA school leaders were subjected to threats of violence.
- The same figure (55 per cent) were subjected to physical violence.
- Fifty-two per cent of WA school leaders had received a “red flag” alert email, up from 28 per cent in 2021.
- The percentage of school leaders encountering physical violence and cyberbullying is at its highest rate since the first survey 12 years ago.

Furthermore, the survey listed the following as the top five sources of stress for school leaders:

- Sheer quantity of work.
- Lack of time to focus on teaching and learning.
- Teacher shortages.
- Mental health issues of students.
- Mental health issues of staff.

According to the survey, 65 participants revealed they were planning to quit or retire early in 2022, which was triple the figure from only three years back.

One female school leader from NSW commented: “I am leaving earlier than expected due to stress, the sense of frustration at being moved away from educational leadership and into management conversations, parental concerns, staff fatigue and my own burnout.”

I have seen and personally experienced some of these stressors firsthand and sadly, many school leaders will not be shocked by these findings. They are a sad and disturbing indictment on the flaws within the system.

It highlights the urgent need for educational authorities and politicians to listen to the profession about their concerns, about what needs to be fixed and to work with them collaboratively to do so.

For government it is instructive that the cost of living payments did not have the desired impact to help retain nor attract school leaders if the last 12 months of vacancies are anything to go by.

The SSTUWA has been sounding the alarm on these issues for many years and the desire to effect change has seen the union commission its independent review of public education.

The review’s expert panel has already held many consultations sessions in metro and regional locations across the state and we are calling for more review submissions from all interested parties.

It is important for all of those who have a stake in public education to let us know about just how these issues, and countless

others, impact on schools, students and educators.

We want to be able to take these findings to the state government so that real, effective and lasting change can be secured for the betterment of the sector, those who work in it, and ultimately the students who learn in it.

For more information about how to send in your submission visit sstuwa.org.au/review

The closing date for submissions is 21 April.

**NSW teachers' hard work effect change**

The SSTUWA congratulates the New South Wales Teachers' Federation (NSWTF) for its strong campaign on public education over the past few years, culminating in a strong presence during the NSW election campaign.

The federation made education a key factor in the state election and the result is a testament to their hard work.

The NSWTF has secured significant pledges from the incoming state Labor government, including a promise to bring funding for state schools up to 100 per cent of the minimum school resourcing standard.



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