Safety in our schools paramount

Safety in schools has become a priority community concern. Members cite safety as the second most significant reason to leave the profession, after workload. Schools are often just a place where the violence manifests, not necessarily the root cause.

In that context we welcome the work of Education Minister Dr Tony Buti in revising the previous minister's 10-point plan as part of a suite of initiatives to try and make school staff and pupils safer. You can read more about this plan on pages 12-13 in this issue of *Western Teacher*.

As with every other aspect of society, schools just reflect the communities they serve. Sadly, across a range of areas weare seeing, violence is used to solve perceived disputes.

Whether it is in the form of road rage, at events or random occurrences, more and more people seem incapable of having disagreements about any issue without resorting to physical attacks.

School staff are all too aware of this. It is not just the case of seeing incidents more often via social media, there is definitely a growth in violent incidents.

All sorts of evidence exists, ranging from feedback to a range of research, increasing workers compensation claims and the vision and social media posts we see all too often.

Yes, it might help if social media and the mainstream TV and newspapers stopped sharing vision, but it wouldn't mean the root causes of violence have gone away.

We need a concerted community effort to make it clear that inciting, filming and taking part in violence is unacceptable and will see you excluded from school.

The SSTUWA has been in direct contact with the minister during the development of the revised plan.

Our clear message, to which he has been extremely receptive, is that leaders and teachers need the unwavering support of the Department when they enforce the policy. The minister is also keenly aware that this has not always been the case.

The minister has supported the union's position that violence in schools is not something that can be addressed in isolation. It is a community issue requiring community solutions.

The SSTUWA secured election commitments for extra alternative learning centres and an increase in the number of school psychiatrists.

We continue to lobby for further improvements to the provision of alternative learning settings and for greater funding of and access to the support networks your students need to address behavioural issues.

The union has created a Workplace Health and Safety Representative (HSR) Hub on the SSTUWA website for members to access support and information. We are introducing bespoke HSR professional learning for leaders to complement the

extensive training HSR reps receive.

Above all we are fostering a spirit of cooperation between members at all levels to address violence by ensuring incidents are reported and that school communities get the support they need to deal collectively and supportively with those who incite, film or take part in violent incidents.

I know only too well that the impact that violence from students or parents has a chilling effect on staff morale at both teacher and leader level.

The SSTUWA will continue to monitor the situation closely so please reach out if you need added support from your union. You deserve to be safe at work and so do your staff.

For Every Child campaign

I was delighted at the start of August to join colleagues in Canberra for the launch of *For Every Child*, the Australian Education Union's campaign to finally bring 100 per cent funding to public schools.

Every member needs to understand the facts about funding. Every member needs to lobby every MP, state or federal, they encounter to tell them how important funding for every child will be to their schools, their students and their ability to effectively teach.

Please have those conversations, factually and politely, whenever an MP visits your school.

Let them know exactly what around $1,800 for every child, every year, would mean to their constituents and ask them to share that information with their parliamentary colleagues.

You can find out more about the campaign at foreverychild.au



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