Essential service pay decline must stop



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Key WA public sector unions in the education, health, community safety, service and other fields at a mass meeting of elected workplace representatives, last night co-signed a formal alliance agreement.That agreement will guide joint negotiation and related action seeking to reverse the real decline in public sector workforce pay since 2017 as the State Government reviews its State Wages Policy in the latter part of 2023. On behalf of the group, UnionsWA has released a new analysis of real pay declines across the key public sector occupations.

Owen Whittle, UnionsWA Secretary said:

“The meeting endorsed a joint agreement between unions to campaign for a pay claim of 7% and 5% in 2024 and 2025 through the Governments State Wages Policy process due to begin in late 2023.

“The harm caused by high and rising costs of living that are not matched by wage increases are felt acutely by working families.

“When considering the impact of real wage decline across WA’s public sector, we also need to assess the impact on local schools, hospitals, child protection, firefighting, policing and other services.

“The impact of declining real wages is a failure to attract and retain staff in key services.

“This analysis shows that real wages have declined significantly in real terms during the term of the State Government.

“This puts at risk the need to attract and retain skilled workers and entice newly qualified teachers, health workers, firefighters and police into key public sector roles.

“The public relies on a capable and well-resourced public sector to keep services running and our community safe.

“A deliberate policy of wage suppression by the State Government has created a pressure cooker in the public sector which can’t retain the skills it needs to deliver for the community.

“Whether it’s delays in our hospitals, waiting lists for community services or Government lacking the capacity to deliver on reforms, this can all be linked to a pay and a lack of capacity in the public sector.

“Public sector workers face a dilemma of continuing to deliver for the community in the face of wage decline and increasing costs of living or seek opportunities elsewhere.

“For many of the occupations that the public sector desperately needs, like those who lead and set the standards in our

schools, hospitals and policing, we have seen real wages decline by $10,000 or more since 2017, or around a 10% decline in real terms.

“In the face of this decline, a joint Public Sector Alliance claim of 7% and 5% is needed to ensure that those who we trust to deliver key services in our community receive the investment and recognition of the important role they play in our community.

Further information

For more information contact: Philip O’Donoghue 0417 923 029 or podonoghue@unionswa.com.au

WA Living Costs Change – June 2017 to June 2023

	June 2017 Index No.	June 2023 Index No.	% Change
Perth CPI All Groups	**109.0**	**131.5**	**20.6%**

Source: ABS, Consumer Price Index, Australia June Quarter 2023, TABLE 5. CPI: Groups, Index Numbers by Capital City https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-in...

Note: In the calculations presented below percentage CPI is not compounded i.e. the estimates of real pay decline are lower than in reality as inflation compounds on top of earlier inflation.

WA Teachers

From: School Education Act Employees' (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreements 2017 and 2021

Annual salaries

Level	**2017**	**2022 (current)**	% Change Levels	Level minus CPI	**2023 if had kept up with Perth CPI**	**Diff between actual and CPI equiv 2023**
Senior Teacher	$108,089	$117,854	9.0%	-11.6%	$130,355	-$12,501

Source: WA Industrial Relations Commission: https://www.wairc.wa.gov.au/resources/agreements/?Letter=S#results

Child Protection Workers

From: Public Sector CSA Agreements 2017 and 2022

Salaries – Specified Calling Salaries

Annual salaries

Level ***(Median salary levels)***	**2017**	**2023**	**% Change Levels**	**Level minus CPI**	***2023 if had kept up with Perth CPI***	***Diff between actual and CPI equiv 2023***
3.4	$118,969	$130,458	9.7%	-11.0%	*$143,477*	*-$13,019*

Source: WA Industrial Relations Commission: https://www.wairc.wa.gov.au/resources/agreements/?...

Child Psychologist

WA Health *From: WA Health System – HSUWA – PACTS Industrial Agreements 2017 and 2022*

Salaries – Professional Division & Other Specified Callings

Annual salaries

Level ***(Median salary levels)***	**2017**	**2023**	**% Change Levels**	**Level minus CPI**	***2023 if had kept up with Perth CPI***	***Diff between actual and CPI equiv 2023***
P-3.1	$113,368	$124,516	9.8%	-10.8%	*$136,722*	*-$12,206*

Source: WA Industrial Relations Commission: https://www.wairc.wa.gov.au/resources/agreements/?...

Firefighters

From: Western Australian Fire Service Enterprise Bargaining Agreements 2017 and 2020

Weekly salaries

Classification	**2017**	**2023 (current)**	% Change Levels	Level minus CPI	***2023 if had kept up with Perth CPI***	***Diff between actual and CPI equiv 2023***
5th Class Firefighter	$77,064.00	$82,612.40	7.2%	-13.4%	$92,939	-$10,327

** Note that Firefighters do required overtime that is not reflected in the hours for which they are formally paid.*

Source: WA Industrial Relations Commission: https://www.wairc.wa.gov.au/resources/agreements/?...

Police

From: Western Australia Police Force Industrial Agreement 2017 and 2022

Annual salaries

Levels	**2017**	**2023**	**% Change Levels**	**Level minus CPI**	***2023 if had kept up with Perth CPI***	***Diff between actual and CPI equiv 2023***
Senior Constable Base Rate	$91,882	$102,142	11.2%	-9.5%	*$110,810*	*-$8,668*

Sources: WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENT 2017 and WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE FORCE INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENT 2022

About the Public Sector Alliance

The membership of the Public Sector Alliance represents Enterprise Bargaining Agreements covering over 100,000 working people in the WA public sector and comprises of coordination by UnionsWA and membership of several of our affiliated unions including United Workers Union, CPSU-CSA, United Professional Firefighters Union, WA Police Union, State School Teacher's Union of WA, Health Services Union WA, Professionals Australia and the Rail Tram and Bus Union.

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