Teachers spending their own money due to underfunding



Teachers are being forced to spend hundreds of dollars of their own money each year to ensure that students do not miss out on vital education activities due to the underfunding of public schools by governments.

National polling of principals, teachers and support staff shows 85% of public school teachers are spending their own money with the average amount being just over $885 a year. NSW, WA and NT teachers are spending on average, over $1,000 each a year.

Based on the national average, the total spending by teachers is $159.5 million a year.

The main items teachers are buying are stationary, classroom equipment, library resources and textbooks. Teachers report that the top reasons they are spending their own money is that it is the only way to deliver a lesson (44%) and students would miss out if they didn't (40%).

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the spending reflected the fact that only 1.3% of public schools are resourced at the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) – the minimum amount governments agreed a decade ago is required to meet the needs of every child.

"Underfunding of public schools is leading to unsustainable workloads for teachers and principals along with the need to use their own money to pay for the basics so that students don't miss out," Ms Haythorpe said.

"This spending reflects the dedication and commitment of teachers in public schools who do whatever it takes every day to deliver a high-quality education to children across Australia.

"Unfortunately, it also reflects the failure of the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to fund public schools to their own funding standard.

"If politicians had to buy their own office equipment, we would never hear the end of it. So why is it okay for them to indefinitely underfund the schools that educate the future of this nation?

The AEU is running the national For Every Child campaign to secure new funding agreements between the Albanese Government and state and territory governments that will deliver 100% of the SRS to all public school systems by 2028.

The research also shows that 72% of public school principals have undertaken fundraising in the last year. Over 80% of those principals say fundraising is an important part of their budget. The top thing the money is used for is classroom equipment.

"The fact that teachers and principals are running sausage sizzles to pay for the basics is a sad reflection on the current priorities of governments in this country.

“Fully funding public schools is an investment in our future. It would allow schools to cut class sizes and provide more individual attention to students while also giving teachers more time to plan high- quality lessons and collaborate with their colleagues,” Ms Haythorpe said.

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