Call to stop public sector pay decline



Key WA public sector unions in the education, health, community safety, service and other fields have co-signed a formal agreement to campaign for wage rises at a recent mass meeting of elected workplace representatives.

That agreement, through the Public Sector Alliance (PSA), 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.

The SSTUWA is part of the PSA and a delegation from the union attended the signing, where union member Sarah Dinan (pictured left, page 13) spoke at the meeting about the impact public sector salaries were having on morale and service delivery.

UnionsWA Secretary Owen Whittle said the meeting endorsed a joint agreement between unions to campaign for a pay claim of seven per cent and five per cent in 2024 and 2025 through the government's 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," he said.

"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."

On behalf of the PSA, UnionsWA has released a new analysis of real pay declines across the key public sector occupations.

"This analysis shows that real wages have declined significantly in real terms during the term of the state government," Mr Whittle said.

“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 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 per cent decline in real terms.

“In the face of this decline, a joint Public Sector Alliance claim of seven per cent and five per cent 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.”

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 affiliated unions including United Workers Union, CPSU/CSA, United Professional Firefighters Union, WA Police Union, SSTUWA, 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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