Presidents, pledges and promises



November State Council Conference: Andrea Mackenzie is presented with the 2023 Lynette Virgona Scholarship.

Bestowal of life membership on former SSTUWA President Pat Byrne, a pledge from the Premier to fully consult with unions before announcing salary rises for the public sector and a promise from the education minister that both state and federal Labor governments are committed to working to deliver full funding for public schools were among the highlights of State Council.

Pat Byrne was given a champagne toast and a standing ovation as the life membership was proposed by union President Matt Jarman, seconded by former SSTUWA President Anne Gisborne and supported in speeches by another former leader Brian Lindberg as well as David Balfour, Antony Pearson and Graeme Repper.

Delivering a video message to over 140 delegates, Education Minister Dr Tony Buti said he understood the demands on teachers and thanked them for their ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality public education.

The minister also pledged to deliver full funding for schools.

“We intend to take the opportunity of having Labor governments at both state and federal level, who share the same values and ideas, to finally deliver 100 per cent funding against the Schooling Resource Standard for every single public school student in Western Australia,” Minister Buti said.

Delegates also heard from Training Minister Simone McGurk about the importance of TAFE, working with the federal government to properly direct extra funding and her personal commitment to the sector.

Minister McGurk also took questions from passionate TAFE delegates who urged the minister to ensure funding was spent in ways that alleviated the workplace issues they were facing.

This included areas such as combined classes which saw students from different levels of learning thrown together requiring practical and theory lessons to be undertaken in the same spaces and with overcrowded classes.

The day began with delegates joining members from other Public Sector Alliance unions at Perth Town Hall to hear Premier Roger Cook say public sector workers were essential to the government achieving its goals, and that he wanted a reset in the relationship between the government and public sector unions.

Amid a series of pledges about growing the sector and returning more work to public hands – including main roads maintenance - the Premier promised there would be extensive consultation with unions before decisions were made about salary offers for public sector workers.

SSTUWA member Reece Young also spoke to the rally, saying “we need change, a proper pay rise, to stem the flow [of teachers leaving the profession] and ensure retention, a change for attraction, change to ensure that we are paid properly for the work we do”.

Mr Young said his colleagues had many stories about the impact of the rising cost of living, accompanied by stagnating salaries, with his colleagues leaving to find opportunities elsewhere.

“We don’t want just thanks,” Mr Young said.

Mr Jarman welcomed the Premier’s desire for a reset in the relationship but said it would have to be accompanied by a reset in salaries (Visit sstuwa.org.au/Nov23PresAddress for the president’s full address).

State Council also heard from Dr Carmen Lawrence on Facing the Facts – a review into Public Education in Western Australia.

Dr Lawrence and her fellow panelists took delegates through the key findings of the review and answered questions from the floor.

One delegate with over 30 years’ teaching experience in two states said she had been moved to tears watching the launch as she had felt it spoke directly to her own experiences.

Several findings on issues such as the need to dramatically revise the Independent Public Schools system drew ovations from the floor.

Dr Lawrence thanked all of those who had made submissions, whether at consultative meetings across Western Australia, in individual written submissions or through peer groups from the sector.

The panel was also thanked for their efforts both by Mr Jarman and by the Minister for Education in his video address.

In response to questions about where the review would go now, Dr Lawrence said the presence of the Education Minister, Shadow Education Minister and numerous MPs at the launch of Facing the Facts demonstrated the impact the review had already begun to have.

Mr Jarman said the launch had generated over 200 media mentions across TV, radio, print and online. It had also attracted over 100 personal and sector submissions, a far higher number than similar reviews conducted in more populous states.

He also said Lindsay Hale, an experienced public servant and former principal, had been engaged to develop practical improvements and work across the sector to bring them into being.

In the business section of State Council, the need to amend districts in line with proposed state electoral boundary revisions was discussed in depth, along with proposals to change union rules to allow the election of State Council delegates for a two-year period rather than 12 months.

Updates were given on both the schools and TAFE General Agreement bargaining processes, where to next after the Voice referendum, early childhood education developments and a range of issues including school leaders and work health and safety.

Delegates were advised that the Growth Team signed up 472 financial members and 604 student members between January and September 2023.

State Council also saw the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Scholarship awarded to Susanne Bowles, and the Lynette Virgona Scholarship presented to Andrea Mackenzie.

Bestowal of life membership on former SSTUWA President Pat Byrne, a pledge from the Premier to fully consult with unions before announcing salary rises for the public sector and a promise from the education minister that both state and federal Labor governments are committed to working to deliver full funding for public schools were among the highlights of State Council.

Pat Byrne was given a champagne toast and a standing ovation as the life membership was proposed by union President Matt Jarman (see page eight), seconded by former SSTUWA President Anne Gisborne and supported in speeches by another former leader Brian Lindberg as well as David Balfour, Antony Pearson and Graeme Repper.

Delivering a video message to over 140 delegates, Education Minister Dr Tony Buti said he understood the demands on teachers and thanked them for their ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality public education.

The minister also pledged to deliver full funding for schools.

“We intend to take the opportunity of having Labor governments at both state and federal level, who share the same values and ideas, to finally deliver 100 per cent funding against the Schooling Resource Standard for every single public school student in Western Australia,” Minister Buti said.

Delegates also heard from Training Minister Simone McGurk about the importance of TAFE, working with the federal government to properly direct extra funding and her personal commitment to the sector.

Minister McGurk also took questions from passionate TAFE delegates who urged the minister to ensure funding was spent in ways that alleviated the workplace issues they were facing.

This included areas such as combined classes which saw students from different levels of learning thrown together requiring practical and theory lessons to be undertaken in the same spaces and with overcrowded classes.

The day began with delegates joining members from other Public Sector Alliance unions at Perth Town Hall to hear Premier Roger Cook say public sector workers were essential to the government achieving its goals, and that he wanted a reset in the relationship between the government and public sector unions.

Amid a series of pledges about growing the sector and returning more work to public hands – including main roads maintenance - the Premier promised there would be extensive consultation with unions before decisions were made about salary offers for public sector workers.

SSTUWA member Reece Young also spoke to the rally, saying “we need change, a proper pay rise, to stem the flow [of teachers leaving the profession] and ensure retention, a change for attraction, change to ensure that we are paid properly for the work we do”.

Mr Young said his colleagues had many stories about the impact of the rising cost of living, accompanied by stagnating salaries, with his colleagues leaving to find opportunities elsewhere.

“We don’t want just thanks,” Mr Young said.

Mr Jarman welcomed the Premier’s desire for a reset in the relationship but said it would have to be accompanied by a reset in salaries (see page five and sstuwa.org.au/Nov23PresAddress for the president’s full address).

State Council also heard from Dr Carmen Lawrence on Facing the Facts – a review into Public Education in Western Australia.

Dr Lawrence and her fellow panelists took delegates through the key findings of the review and answered questions from the floor.

One delegate with over 30 years’ teaching experience in two states said she had been moved to tears watching the launch as she had felt it spoke directly to her own experiences.

Several findings on issues such as the need to dramatically revise the Independent Public Schools system drew ovations from the floor.

Dr Lawrence thanked all of those who had made submissions, whether at consultative meetings across Western Australia, in individual written submissions or through peer groups from the sector.

The panel was also thanked for their efforts both by Mr Jarman and by the Minister for Education in his video address.

In response to questions about where the review would go now, Dr Lawrence said the presence of the Education Minister,

Shadow Education Minister and numerous MPs at the launch of Facing the Facts demonstrated the impact the review had already begun to have.

Mr Jarman said the launch had generated over 200 media mentions across TV, radio, print and online. It had also attracted over 100 personal and sector submissions, a far higher number than similar reviews conducted in more populous states.

He also said Lindsay Hale, an experienced public servant and former principal, had been engaged to develop practical improvements and work across the sector to bring them into being.

In the business section of State Council, the need to amend districts in line with proposed state electoral boundary revisions was discussed in depth, along with proposals to change union rules to allow the election of State Council delegates for a two-year period rather than 12 months.

Updates were given on both the schools and TAFE General Agreement bargaining processes, where to next after the Voice referendum, early childhood education developments and a range of issues including school leaders and work health and safety.

Delegates were advised that the Growth Team signed up 472 financial members and 604 student members between January and September 2023.

State Council also saw the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Scholarship awarded to Susanne Bowles, and the Lynette Virgona Scholarship presented to Andrea Mackenzie.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026