No wonder leadership applications are declining

Principals and school leaders are overwhelmingly reporting they are burnt out from workload, and more than half said in the SSTUWA State of our Schools Survey that they had concerns about their personal health and wellbeing.

In terms of workload, about 95 per cent of school leaders said it was high or very high. Forty per cent of school leaders reported working over 40 hours a week, 37 per cent reported working over 50 hours a week and almost 16 per cent reported working more than 60 hours a week. And for school principals who participated in our survey, 39 per cent reported working more than 50 hours per week with 20 per cent indicating they were working more than 60 hours per week.

When asked about staffing, almost 58 per cent of school leaders said their school was inadequately staffed. The teacher shortage, as we all know, is impacting everyone; 44 per cent of our school leader respondents reported having to teach more hours than timetabled in the classroom due to shortages, while 58 per cent of principals reported having to teach regularly in classrooms.

It's no wonder then that people are no longer applying in competitive numbers for principal positions because the extra workload is huge and the compensation is inadequate.

Let's focus on salaries for just a moment. At admin level 3.1 the current salary is $125,850. If salaries had kept up with Perth CPI, in 2023, an admin level 3.1 salary should be $135,418. That means that our school leaders and principals on admin level 3.1 are $13,595 worse off.

As we head up the admin incremental salary scale, those principals who are at level 6.1, had their salaries kept up with Perth CPI, would be almost $20,000 better off compared with their 2017 salary.

Quite simply, the state government wages policy, capping public sector worker wages, has to go.

Throughout 2023, school leader and principal members have actively engaged in a variety of events and meetings including the reducing workload and red tape consultation meeting (with the report seemingly lost in red tape), the new WHS legislation training event for school leaders, the Pathways to Secondary School Success consultation meeting, the School Leader Committee and Reference Group meetings and various other ETC events held throughout the year.

I would like to thank all members who have attended these events, sharing their perspectives, ideas, knowledge, experience and solutions in order to help shape the direction for public education.

As mentioned during State Council, negotiation meetings with the department have commenced.

In conjunction with other Log of Claim items that pertain to all employees covered by the Agreement, there are several claims designed for leaders. Some of these claims include an increase in the number of collegiate principals, access to part-time work for principals, professional learning, level 3 principal admin time and the reinstatement of the Level 3 Classroom Teacher time to name but a few.

Central to this Log of Claims are a bid to address class sizes across both primary and secondary schools and the need for urgent action to address issues of recruitment and retention, red tape, workload and violence in schools.

Our Log of Claims is about collaboration, not a division between school leaders, principals and teachers.

We should be working together as one system, not as individual silos fighting to outpace each other with slick advertising campaigns or business plans.

Schools are not businesses and principals are not CEOs. Schools are places of learning, and if we are truly working towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, SDG #4, our public education system should be working to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

It is time to face the facts and implement measures now in order to move forward, collectively and together, to ensure public education for the public good.

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