Taking action to fix core concerns



By Natalie Blewitt
Senior Vice President

On 23 January advice was sent out to all school members via eNews regarding Directives to SSTUWA members from the Executive Committee in relation to the 2023 EBA negotiations.

A letter was sent separately to all principals (both member and non-member) via email to all schools.

You can check sstuwa.org.au/GA23 to see what the latest situation is regarding the directives or if any offer has been received since *Western Teacher* went to print and appeared online.

These are the directives that were issued:

Executive Directives

Directives to SSTUWA members from the Executive Committee in relation to the 2023 EBA negotiations

The SSTUWA has not received an offer from the Department of Education of terms for a replacement General Agreement.

The new state government wages policy was announced in December, confirming the removal of the salary cap and a return to collective bargaining.

The Public Sector Alliance of unions agreed on a joint position as follows:

A) An increase of seven per cent for the first year of the Agreement to all salaries and allowances.

B) An increase of five per cent in the second year of the Agreement to all salaries and allowances, or national CPI, whichever is the greater.

We continue to negotiate with the employer on salaries and other aspects of the Log of Claims but have not yet received an offer.

In the interim, the SSTUWA Executive has resolved the following directives:

As no agreement in principle was reached by 25 January 2024, the SSTUWA Executive authorises SSTUWA members to implement the following **stage one** industrial actions from the commencement of Term 1 (29 January 2024):

1. No member is to participate in any performance management or performance review processes/meetings. This includes

the Principal Professional Review process (PPR).

(This refers to performance management only, it does not include sub-standard performance processes).

2. Members are not to attend any (whole or part of) staff meetings held:

- In accordance with clause 9.3 of the General Agreement 2021 (i.e. the five hours per term).
- Outside instructional hours (before/after school; during lunch or recess; for school leaders this includes regional, cluster and network meetings).
- During DOTT time.

Directive two includes:

- Committee meetings
- Learning area meetings
- Planning, assessment and reporting meetings
- Network or cluster meetings
- Communication meetings including those held before school or during recess or lunch

Not included in directive two:

- Critical incident meetings
- Individual parental meetings
- Trade off - professional learning
- Student individual case conference
- Union meetings
- Parent/teacher interviews
- Professional learning
- Public School Review
- School board meetings

If you are a member of the SSTUWA please support your colleagues in their actions. We advise principals and union representatives to discuss and manage the implementation of these directives.

These actions are essential as part of the process to seek solutions to the ever-increasing workloads of teachers and leaders alike in public schools.

In 2023 the SSTUWA conducted a State of our Schools survey. Over 1,400 members responded. The survey included sections for principals and school leaders. In terms of workload, among school leader respondents about 95 per cent said it was high or very high, with 40 per cent working over 40 hours a week, 37 per cent working over 50 hours a week and almost 16 per cent working more than 60 hours a week.

Over 20 per cent of principals were working more than 60 hours per week and 39 per cent more than 50 hours per week. This meant 92 per cent of school leaders surveyed reported high to very high stress levels, a figure matched by principal respondents.

Seventy-three per cent of school leader respondents and 63 per cent of principal respondents had considered leaving the profession over the previous four years. The core issues driving such considerations were burn out, lack of respect for the profession, workload and work/life balance, personal health and wellbeing and salaries.

Any industrial action can be inconvenient for members and non-members alike. However, the developing crisis in teacher numbers will not be fixed until core concerns are addressed.

The SSTUWA has created a detailed Log of Claims, available at sstuwa.org.au/GA23, which seek proper action from the employers to address workload, wellbeing, safety and salary issues, with specific claims centred on improving conditions for principals and leaders.

If you are not a member of the SSTUWA you can click here to sign up and view the log.

If you are a member of a different organisation or a member of none, please consider supporting your peers in whatever manner you can.

We absolutely understand that school leaders face pressure from all sides when industrial action is taken. This is why it is a last resort. We have urged all reps and members to make sure this situation is approached collegially and respectfully.

There is already an active effort to divide school leaders and teachers. It is deliberate and designed to weaken the bonds that teachers develop and share as they move into leadership roles.

The SSTUWA is offering to work cooperatively with government to fix public education and address the core issues identified in both the *Facing the Facts* review and the Minister's own red tape review.

We must address the factors that are driving teachers out of the profession and restore its rewards and reputation. That can only be done with a united approach at all levels.

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