# Facing the facts spurs change



By Natalie Blewitt
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When the SSTUWA commissioned a review and the panel released its report into the state of public education in WA, *Facing the Facts*, we knew that things had to change in the sector to ensure its success in the long-term.

The results were sobering but the truth behind the health of public education in Western Australian schools had to be revealed by the Lawrence Review in order to fully resource it to the level needed.

The first step towards this was the announcement in January of a new in-principle funding agreement that will begin the journey towards delivering 100 per cent of the School Resourcing Standard (SRS) to WA public schools. There is still at least another four per cent in funding to be recovered and we need clarity on what conditions might accompany the funding.

The union has no doubt *Facing the Facts* has played an influential role in securing this agreement, backed up by the tireless efforts of its members over the years in campaigning for public education. *Facing the Facts* also triggered the minister to order a red tape review which confirmed the findings of Dr Carmen Lawrence AO and her team.

The welcome announcement of improved funding for public schools directly addresses recommendation 17 of the Lawrence report – and perhaps opens the door for consideration of recommendations 18, 19, 20 and 21. *Facing the Facts* provides the blueprint for planning the optimal investment of new resources. You can read the recommendations mentioned here by visiting sstuwa.org.au/review

The union has started to, and will continue to, meet with stakeholders in order to discuss the report's findings and recommendations.

District Councils will be briefed during Term 1 and support provided to engage members, P&Cs and members of Parliament. Aspects of the current Schools General Agreement and Log of Claims that are supported by *Facing the Facts* or the Red Tape review (and in most cases both) are being identified to support the bargaining process.
Forums with school leaders have been conducted face-to-face and online. The SSTUWA president has corresponded with the Premier, who has noted the report with interest and subsequently advised that, consistent with our request, the Department of Education (DoE) will take part in a Public Sector Commission Agency Capability Review, which was set to commence in March.

Correspondence and discussions with the education minister and DoE director-general have led to agreement that*Facing the Facts* will be responded to through the Employee Relations Executive Committee (EREC). The DoE has been provided an initial frame for these discussions.

Other members of State Cabinet have been provided letters drawing their attention to the report in general and highlighting matters directly relevant to their portfolios. The intent is to also enliven Cabinet discussion in relation to public education, school funding and the reports. In addition, meetings have been accepted by various ministers to further discuss the report.

*Facing the Facts* has also been shared with the Minister for Early Childhood – Minister Winton, the Auditor General and the chairs of the Education and Health Standing Committee, the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council and the School Curriculum and Standards Authority, highlighting matters most relevant to each. This is following the launch of the report last November, which was attended by many state MPs and other important stakeholders.

The SSTUWA is engaged in an ongoing effort to garner support from all those who have an interest in public education and human services, with a focus on infants, children and young people, including the Commissioner for Children and Young People and WA Council of Social Service.

Responses have consistently proved strong and positive. So far, most stakeholders have already thoroughly engaged with *Facing the Facts* for themselves.

A dashboard to monitor correspondence, actions and progress against recommendations is in development.

The SSTUWA sees *Facing the Facts* as an active document. It is not a report that will be left to sit on the bookshelf, and the union continues to work hard to keep it front and centre as a guide to solutions for public education.

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