Reducing workload and class sizes a priority: June State Council Conference

Western Teacher volume 53.4 June 2024



A ministerial pledge to tackle workload and renewed union efforts to reduce class sizes through a community campaign headlined June State Council Conference.

State Council is the SSTUWA's highest decision-making body and a conference is held in June and November each year to discuss, debate and make decisions on the union's direction and activities.

Education Minister Tony Buti spoke at the conference and announced his support for a Workforce Ministerial Taskforce.

The taskforce will report to the minister directly and focus on classroom support, complex behaviour management, professional learning compliance and individual student documented plans, as well as support in managing school leader and teacher workloads.

"I do believe that your time and energy as teachers should be spent on doing what you should be doing and that is teaching our students to succeed," Minister Buti said.

"You want to be in the classroom teaching your students rather than being involved in a lot of extra-curricular or administrative duties.

"The establishment of the workload taskforce reporting directly to the minister demonstrates that we believe that the issues that you have been raising are very important … you now have a mechanism to bring those concerns to the minster."

SSTUWA President Matt Jarman said: “This taskforce not only offers a clear way to monitor the new measures that will come in if the agreement is accepted, it will be crucial in bringing about serious reductions in workload.”

“We will be able to take evidence from teachers and from school leaders on whether they are getting the extra support they need and indeed if it is even possible for schools to offer that support within current resources.”

Mr Jarman earlier opened the conference by reviewing the success of the 23 April Stop Work action meeting of members, noting the many improvements gained in the Agreement in Principle (AIP) – which was scheduled for member vote after the conference.

“(These) all came as a direct result of those actions by members sacrificing half a day’s pay and making their voices heard,” he said.

Mr Jarman also spoke about schools funding, tackling workplace violence and the success of the union-commissioned *Facing the Facts* report in moving the wheels of change for public education in WA.

“If anyone had told me in November when I stood in this room and handed a copy to the Minister that we would achieve such an outcome by now, I would have admired their amazing optimism but perhaps quietly doubted their judgment,” he said.

“What I described last year as tempered optimism has been more than met.”
For more on Mr Jarman’s speech, you can read a transcript of his address to June State Council Conference on pages 4-9 of this issue.

Mr Jarman also said the union was not giving up the fight when it came to the issue of reducing class sizes, and unveiled a new SSTUWA campaign that will run in the lead up of the 2025 state election.

“Class sizes is a community issue, not just a workplace issue for teachers,” he said.
“We have attracted significant publicity on the issue by including it in our Log of Claims, and, as I have said, the current AIP offers some important first steps on addressing the issue.”

Daniel Smith of ReGen Strategic gave delegates an insight into the political and economic headwinds, which came into play around reducing class sizes. He highlighted the considerable community support for class size reduction, shown in a recent community survey, but emphasised there was still much work to do.

Delegates then gave feedback on the topic, which will be used to help shape the campaign.

Other keynote speakers to June State Council Conference included Australian Education Union (AEU) deputy federal secretary Nicole Calnan, who spoke about the work of APHEDA (Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad: Union Aid-Abroad), the international aid agency of the ACTU; and AEU Victoria senior vice president Justin Mullally, who provided a Victorian TAFE campaign update via videoconferencing.

June State Council Conference this year was held at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, which will also be the venue for November’s conference.

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