Facing the Facts about attraction and retention in the regions

In 2024, the SSTUWA came together and won some significant improvements for regional teachers, school psychologists and school leaders:

- Staff placement trials for teachers and school leaders.
- District allowances.
- Ongoing DHS above formula funding for the life of the General Agreement.
- Travel concessions and air-con subsidies for eligible staff.
- Right of return for school leaders and directors.
- Pro-rata long service leave eligibility following seven years.
- Internal relief payments for principals and deputies.

But the battle to improve attraction and retention in the regions is far from over.

It is now time we saw public school staffing processes, incentives, supports and working environments completely overhauled. The flaws that have emerged in the Independent Public School initiative have created inequity and achieved little more to support educators or meet the needs of students in regional WA.

A public commitment to face-to-face instruction is crucial. Since the pandemic, many regional students have struggled to access in-person teaching, affecting both primary and secondary education.

Ensuring equitable instructional standards for regional students is essential. Ensuring course delivery is equally important for regional students and their parents whilst also providing greater strategic direction to those who work in and lead our schools.

Staffing schools requires increased involvement from central and regional offices. Reviewing staff placement procedures, focusing on redeployment protocols and selection processes, will ensure fair placement for all public school staff.

Offering permanency to all regional teaching appointments and reforming staff placement processes will guarantee a return pathway for teachers and school leaders from regional to metropolitan schools.

Expanding attraction and retention incentives and committing to ongoing funding is vital. Assistance for educators to reduce HECS debts, along with a $2,000 teaching resources grant per teacher, would provide much-needed support. Additionally, providing each and every teacher, school psychologist and school leader with a tablet or laptop as a “tool of the trade” is essential.

Centrally funded internal relief for teachers in the Remote Teaching Service and our most impacted regional schools, development and delivery of curriculum resources, along with professional learning opportunities in face-to-face settings at the local level are necessary. Re-establishing localised regional-level support and ensuring high-quality regional worksites, including increased funding for school maintenance, are
also critical.

To attract and retain essential educators such as teachers, school psychologists and school leaders in regional and remote areas, housing conditions must be confronted. The post-war boom of the 1950s saw the establishment of government housing for public employees, which successfully drew workers to regional areas for decades. However, policy changes in 2006 regarding Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) have led to a significant reduction in housing stock.

Consequently, many employees are now forced to live in substandard temporary accommodation for extended periods, creating a substantial disincentive for public sector workers to serve in the regions. Solving this would contribute to addressing the overall housing shortage in WA.

The SSTUWA advocates for several critical changes to address these issues. Firstly, we propose the creation of a central coordination authority dedicated to public sector housing, ensuring equitable principles are applied across all agencies.

Additionally, an independent review of the Tenant Rent Setting Framework Policy is needed. This review should consider factors such as Perth median rental prices, the age and quality of the house, its distance from major centres and implement capped rent increases.

The SSTUWA calls for a reduction in all GROH charges and the option for employees living in GROH to salary package their mortgages during their tenure. To enhance safety and security, all GROH properties should be equipped with internal motion detectors, external cameras connected to looped hard drives, audio and visual alarms and security screens.

An independent review of GROH maintenance, safety and security standards is also essential, along with adequate funding to ensure a targeted improvement program. Adopting a preventative maintenance routine, rather than a reactive approach, will help maintain high standards and provide a more stable living environment for educators – and reduce costs.

By implementing these measures, we can create a more attractive and supportive environment for educators in regional and remote areas, improve engagement and outcomes for students, give families confidence, strengthen communities and ultimately benefit the whole state.

Facing the facts about attraction and retention in the regions means committing to these comprehensive changes to ensure a brighter future for regional education in WA.



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