Full commitment needed for the battle ahead



It is concerning that the extreme education policies of One Nation were echoed by the Coalition.

The SSTUWA's guiding principles are fair funding and equality. We commit to the protection of education for the common good, keeping schools safe sanctuaries of learning, being proud of our profession, as well as standing up for and defending our rights.

Continuing to achieve success in securing the support public schools and TAFE needs demands our full commitment to those principles.

As we absorb and process the result of the federal election, it is an exciting time for all public educators.

The efforts of the Australian Education Union, including the SSTUWA, to publicise the importance of ensuring the funding secured for public schools through over a decade of hard work and campaigning, as well as securing the Free TAFE pledges of the federal government were, thankfully, successful.

In WA the seats of Bullwinkel, Pearce and Moore were chosen by the AEU as ones where a difference could be made by reminding voters of the positive impact full funding and Free TAFE would have.

Those efforts were very successful. On the national stage we now need to try to secure faster access to full funding for schools and address the outstanding needs of TAFE given its currently improved appreciation in the electorate.

We should be wary not to become complacent.

During the campaign we saw issues raised that should concern every school leader, every teacher and most significantly every parent.

Way back at the start of the campaign Peter Dutton declared he would reverse funding for fee-free TAFE. He also said he would make major cuts to the federal Department of Education and at the same time refused to confirm his position on the school funding deal teachers have fought over a decade to secure.

As Australian Education Union Federal President Correna Haythorpe said at the time: “He [Dutton] is taking a leaf from the Trump playbook by going for the Department of Education by threatening to cut thousands of jobs, control what teachers teach – and pull funding if they don’t comply with his ideology.

“Peter Dutton’s proposed control of the school curriculum is chilling, when we see what is happening in the US with book banning and the destruction of teachers’ professional autonomy.”

The Coalition consistently refused to detail changes it would make to the national curriculum after Peter Dutton said students were being indoctrinated. He pledged in his budget reply speech to “restore” a curriculum focused on “critical thinking, responsible citizenship and common sense”.

As The Guardian reported during the campaign: “That was followed up not once, but several times, with references to the education system in recent weeks, including floating on Sky News placing a ‘condition’ on funding to ensure kids weren’t ‘guided by some sort of an agenda that’s come out of universities’ and pledging ‘we need to stop the teaching of some of the curriculum that says that our children should be ashamed of being Australian’ in the Channel 7 debate.”

That type of language should chill every public educator’s heart – because we have heard it before.

In November 2022 Pauline Hanson rose to speak on One Nation’s Australian Education Legislation Amendment (Prohibiting the Indoctrination of Children) Bill 2020.

She said: “The purpose of this legislation is to give parents the legal right to protect their children from indoctrination at school. This bill is aimed at ensuring schools and teachers do what they’re supposed to do, rather than what many of them are doing today. They are supposed to educate our children.”

And:

“Secondly, the bill seeks to tie federal education funding to the existence of state and territory legislation and prohibits indoctrination in schools.”

Ms Hanson went further during the discussion over her proposed bill, fundamentally saying that if a parent (any parent) complained about what their children were being taught (what, not how) then the teacher and school would be investigated and funding potentially withdrawn.



By Matt Jarman
President

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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