A full spectrum of issues discussed at conference



Progress towards full funding for public schools; this year's federal and state elections; new ministers; a capability review report on the Department of Education (DoE); the implementation of General Agreements for both schools and TAFE, and the growing need for protection and advice to teachers dealing with international issues were just some of the issues under the spotlight at June State Council Conference – and that was just those mentioned by SSTUWA President Matt Jarman.

State Council, the union's highest decision-making body, also heard new state Education Minister Sabine Winton (pictured below, bottom left) confirm her commitment to being a champion for teachers by announcing Edith Cowan University School of Education Emeritus Professor Colleen Hayward as the independent chair of the Ministerial Workload Intensification Taskforce.

Minister Winton said she would apply a filter to every initiative, asking herself how it would make tangible differences to teachers in the classroom.

As a teacher with 27 years' experience, Minister Winton said she felt the weight of expectation and responsibility that came with being education minister, saying it kept her up at night.

"I will use my influence to foster respect for teachers and school leaders inside and beyond the school gate," she said.

"I will be a common sense minister. It's important to me that I continue to be a minister who isn't afraid to do what needs to be done."

The minister said she was committed to the development of a play strategy and assured delegates that early childhood teachers would have input into the state government's election pledge to trial full-time kindy.

As union president Matt Jarman introduced a new SSTUWA campaign to bring respect back into schools, the minister said she wanted the DoE to do all it could to ensure a safe working environment.

“Staff seem to be constantly under attack, particularly on social media, often with no meaningful way of defending themselves,” Ms Winton said.

“As a system, we need to look at how else we can support principals and schools to deal with the barrage of complaints and destructive criticism coming their way.”

Whilst acknowledging more needed to be done, the minister said the brilliant teaching in WA public schools should be celebrated.

She also said it was an exciting time to take up the role, with a deal for full funding being achieved with the federal government.

Delegates had earlier heard from Federal Education Minister Jason Clare, who restated his commitment to the work teachers did in public schools, declaring the only job he had ever wanted in federal cabinet was that of education minister.







Australian Education Union (AEU) Federal President Correna Haythorpe (pictured above, top left) shared with delegates the enormous significance of the federal election campaign, leading up to the landslide win by Labor on 3 May this year.

Ms Haythorpe highlighted the prominence of public education in the campaign – particularly around the full funding of public schools and the declaration by the Coalition that it would reverse the enormous successes of fee-free TAFE.

“Don’t tell me that education doesn’t matter as a vote winner,” she said.

“We knew it was a vote winner and the election proved it. For five weeks solid, it trended as a top three issue. With our help, [and] of course, with all of your help.”

Earlier, Mr Jarman had opened June State Council Conference with a speech that ranged across the breadth of issues tackled since the previous State Council Conference in November 2024.

He said it might well come to pass that people would come to look back on 24 January 2025 as the most significant day in Australian public education – the day that over a decade of tireless campaigning by the AEU and the SSTUWA finally paid off.

That was when Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had announced the new funding deal that delivered 25 per cent of funding through the Commonwealth government, as long as states contributed 75 per cent.

“Most critically of all, the PM said this: ‘Importantly this new agreement means accounting practices like capital depreciation can no longer be counted as education investment. Instead, every dollar of funding will go into helping children learn,” Mr Jarman added.

“Twelve months before, in January 2024 when WA entered a new agreement with the Commonwealth on funding, it was declared that WA public schools would from then on be fully funded.

“The SSTUWA continued to point out that such claims would be false as long as what used to be an additional four per cent in funding could still be counted as part of the state government’s contribution. It was an accounting trick that equated to a further $200 million a year being denied to WA schools.

“It is a major victory to see that returned to schools as additional funding.

“There is still much to do, especially to persuade the Albanese Government that while this deal is crucial the funding must come quicker, or another generation of students will be educated in underfunded public schools that don’t have enough teachers.”

However, Mr Jarman added, people should not underestimate the significance of what had been achieved.

He praised the work of Ms Haythorpe, (who was joined at State Council Conference by acting AEU Federal Secretary Nicole Calnan and a number of AEU branch presidents and senior officers - pictured below, far bottom), in never giving up on the fight for full funding.

Mr Jarman also praised every union member who had supported funding campaigns over the years.

“Whether you came out to meet trucks and trailers carrying the full funding message, travelled to Canberra to talk to politicians, sent emails or postcards, joined social media campaigns or lobbied your state or federal MPs, or wore the badges and the t-shirts, every single one of you shares the credit for a crucial development in revitalising public education in Australia,” he said.

“Australia-wide, the importance of TAFE was highlighted during the federal election campaign, it was the educational point of difference for many weeks as Dutton danced around public school funding questions and shifted position avoiding any form of clarity.”

Mr Jarman also highlighted accusations from the-then Coalition leader that teachers were indoctrinating students and reminded delegates that nobody should forget both Mr Dutton and now Liberal leader Sussan Ley were very clear (and stated on many occasions) on their opposition to fee-free TAFE, despite 600,000 Australians now being enrolled

in TAFE and working towards higher qualifications and wage earnings.

“The truth is, as we said years ago, TAFE works,” he said

In the federal election campaign Australians had been presented with policies that mimicked those of US President Donald Trump and had rejected them.

Mr Jarman also laid out the way the SSTUWA had approached the state election held earlier in the year.

He said a detailed Facing the Facts-based process tackled nine crucial areas for schools and, in a separate document, targeted four key areas for TAFE.

This approach had secured a number of pledges from the Labor government that matched almost exactly the union’s stated aims. One major news outlet called the state poll an education election.

Mr Jarman welcomed the new Education Minister Sabine Winton and DoE director general Jay Peckitt, as well as a new Minister for Training in Amber-Jade Sanderson, who has been tasked with a wide-ranging economic portfolio.

In his broad-ranging address, Mr Jarman also said the recent agency review findings on the DoE highlighted a series of issues, including the need for better strategies to address the ever-growing complex needs of students, tangible ways to address teacher workload, better cooperation across agencies and long-term solutions to the extra problems facing regional and remote educators.

He said the review also noted the failure to deal with the clear and obvious faults in the current Independent Public Schools system and a desperate need for more support for school leaders.

Above all, said Mr Jarman, the SSTUWA agreed with the need for a cohesive and cooperatively developed long-term strategy to address the sort of issues that have led to 5,200 Western Australian educators leaving the system over three years.

In conclusion, Mr Jarman said his message to the federal and state governments was simple.

“Let’s get on with it,” he said.

“Let’s accelerate full funding. Deliver it now. I know my fellow presidents will support us in that demand.

“Let’s accelerate a campaign on respect for teachers. Now.

“Let’s tackle class sizes. The biggest state has the best performing economy apparently – and the biggest class sizes. Fix it now.

“Let’s tackle workload today, not tomorrow.

“This union has worked hard for over 125 years. It will continue to do so. The next 12 months will be critical in my opinion for the next 10 years.

“We must restore respect for everyone who works in public education.

“We must continue to fight for equity and equality and deliver the sort of public education system that raises everyone up.”

Mr Jarman’s full speech can be found here.







Combating disinformation in the modern age

With a torrent of disinformation facing teachers and students alike, author and journalist Van Badham’s presentation to June State Council Conference was timely.

Van (pictured above, far right) took delegates through the web of disinformation on the internet and social media and the goal of those spreading disinformation, which was to introduce internal discord, mutual hatred and distrust of one another.

Doing this would enable political advantage in the democratic system to those that operated in spreading disinformation.

Van spoke about how disinformation impacted on human thinking, how it was deliberately placed, and the tactics used in disinformation campaigns.

She outlined the history of the use of disinformation as a military strategy and its spread into the broader community.

The presentation was concluded with ideas as to how to identify and deal with disinformation in the classroom.

Members can find out more by accessing the presentation here.

Guidance sought for discourse on international issues

The current conflict in the Middle East was a pointed topic of discussion at June State Council Conference, with several motions put forward by branches.

The motions, carried unanimously, were to support the AEU's 2023 Statement on the Conflict between Israel and Palestine, for the SSTUWA to communicate this position to members and support for teachers highlighting international issues and human rights in teaching programs.

For the full AEU statement from 2023 click here.

A further AEU statement on Gaza and Peace Education can be found here.

In the International Report a separate AEU position, supporting the ACTU's May 2025 statement on Gaza, was endorsed. The ACTU statement can be found here.

SSTUWA President Matt Jarman, in his opening address, said there was a need for comprehensive advice from the DoE to teachers to offer explanations and context to students during incredibly difficult times internationally.

He said guidance documentation for schools might soon be available, which in no small part was a consequence of SSTUWA persistence after widely sharing the experience of its membership.

The AEU is also working at the federal level to seek guidance for teachers in this area.

The SSTUWA has formally requested guidance from the DoE for school leaders and teachers in navigating the nuances of the conflict in their schools and workplaces.

In doing this the SSTUWA affirms the right of individual employees to express their cultural identity. We acknowledge that tension can arise when an individual's expression of their identity becomes associated with a controversial policy position.

The union accepts the legal fact that as public sector workers, government school teachers must abide by the DoE's code of conduct and avoid perceptions that personal political views may conflict with their professional duties.

The SSTUWA expects the DoE to act with sensitivity and respect towards employees and resolve any issues that arise in a respectful and considerate way, without being influenced by intemperate media reports or political commentary, and we will support our members should this not be found to be the case.

The SSTUWA believes that discussions in schools about challenging issues that arise in communities are best addressed by educating students and developing their ability to think carefully and critically about controversial matters.

The union anticipates that individual teachers will ensure that all students in their class, regardless of ethnic, religious or social background, experience a safe, welcoming and nurturing learning environment.





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