Facing the Facts and the future of public education



It was one of those unforgettable moments. State Council Conference, November 2023. Dr Carmen Lawrence and her expert panel shared the findings and recommendations of *Facing the Facts*. A tide of emotion swept the room: Finally, someone had listened!

> ***Facing the Facts: Public schools have been starved of funds and support while coping with accelerating demands on the curriculum and the challenge of educating many more disadvantaged students and students with increasingly complex needs.***

Thanks to SSTUWA campaigning and members' action we have seen some good progress in response to *Facing the Facts* – but there is still much more to
be done.

Members who signed up for online consultation groups in Weeks 4-6 of Term 3 can contribute to the development of the Department of Education's (DoE) next strategic plan. Let's hope that, once again, someone really listens!

Due for release in Term 1 of 2026, we are told:

> *The new strategic plan will help us reach our aspirations for public schools in Western Australia.*
>
> *The strategic plan will also:*
>
> - *Look beyond the short term and address our big challenges in education with clarity and purpose.*
> - *Align our support systems to the real work schools are doing, such as student wellbeing, shifting expectations, and the pressures on our people.*

This is a great opportunity to give the system guidance based on the everyday experience of teachers, school psychologists

and school leaders.

> ***Facing the Facts: The centralisation of services has not met the needs of schools for administrative and educational support.***

The Agency Capability Review told the DoE that it must exercise its system leadership role to make explicit expectations on key policy and strategy matters, respond to escalating complex student needs at a system and cross government level, and develop a deliberate, future focused workforce strategy to address significant attraction and retention issues.

The next strategic plan must reflect this. As we finally approach funding that meets the minimum set by the Schooling Resource Standard, the time has arrived for wise investment in public schooling.

> ***Facing the Facts: An increasing proportion of children are not developmentally ready for school.***

In considering your input you might keep these key directions in mind - and ponder what is needed at the system level to:

- Strengthen support for teaching and learning.
- Deepen student engagement.
- Improve behaviour and reduce violence and aggression.
- Address complex needs.
- Strengthen Aboriginal education.
- Strengthen system leadership and support.

> ***Facing the Facts: A small, but apparently growing, number of children engage in aggressive and disruptive behaviour at school.***

Two consistent themes run through *Facing the Facts*: the need for DoE services to better support students and staff; the need to contain and reduce workload.

These objectives need to be addressed together in all aspects of a new strategic direction.

Facing the Facts says it. Indeed, they can only be addressed together!

Understanding and Reducing the Workload of Teachers and Leaders says it.

The Agency Capability Review says it.

The SSTUWA says it – and many in the community agree.

> ***Facing the Facts: More support for students with special needs is needed, especially in disadvantaged schools.***

If you've expressed interest in the DoE's consultation process, please don't miss this chance to deliver practical advice that ultimately will help our members focus on the core business of teaching and learning, feel less overwhelmed by ridiculous expectations and enjoy more satisfaction in sticking with our profession.

Your union will provide the DoE comprehensive advice based on the evidence. Help the DoE face the facts by having your say based on your experience.

> ***Facing the Facts: The profession is at breaking point.***



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