Full-service schools another win from Facing the Facts

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The announcement by the state government of a trial of full-service schools delivers yet another win from the process the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia began with *Facing the Facts*.

Incredible as it may seem, we are still short of the second anniversary of the launch of the *Facing the Facts* report. The impact it has had on public education and public policy in that time is extraordinary.

Way back in the early days of consultations by Dr Carmen Lawrence and her team, I came away from a session full of admiration for a regional senior high school staff who had embraced the process.

One of the many things they suggested was a campus where health professionals and other support staff for students would be on site full-time.

They were not the only group to see the enormous potential benefits of a community-based approach that would see health staff and others, such as career practitioners, TAFE lecturers and cultural advisors, based on campus and available not only for students but the broader community.

In his media release announcing the Connected Community School trial, Premier Roger Cook said:

"The Connected Community School trial - funded under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement with the Albanese Labor Government - aims to ensure families can easily access community health and social services, while improving students' educational and wellbeing outcomes beyond the classroom".

"Participating schools will consult with their community and stakeholders to work towards addressing specific local needs with a range of initiatives, such as making services available on site to remove barriers to access," the Premier added.

In its *Facing the Facts*-based position paper ahead of the 2025 state election, the SSTUWA lobbied directly for the evaluation and expansion of full-service schools.

We called for the sharing of school infrastructure with the community. The SSTUWA also called for improved local support services. The SSTUWA also asked for well-resourced support services both within schools and to be regionally based as well as reform to support services.

These asks reflected closely the recommendations of *Facing the Facts*, which in its final report called on the state government to restore locally based services to schools and to fund dedicated cross-portfolio services.

We welcome these suggestions being adopted. We want to see the trial at the four selected locations - Ashburton Drive and Clarkson Primary Schools along with Girrawheen Senior High School and Roebourne District High School – succeed and set in place a model that can deliver, if done properly, great results for WA public school students.

This has to be in the context of system-wide improvements. Individual schools cannot make this work alone.

Reform of the Department of Education's (DoE) support for schools at a local level must be a priority to meet the needs of rising complexities and to help address staff retention concerns.

The SSTUWA welcomes this trial – as long as it is properly funded and supported. It cannot be left to school leaders to coordinate these relationships. The trial will require specific administrative support.

It is encouraging to see that the DoE director general Jay Peckitt has confirmed the intention is not to raise the workload of schools leaders and staff.

Funding for any additional positions will come from the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (that new deal, of course

secured by the more than a decade-long campaigning of the SSTUWA and AEU).

However, funding is just one aspect of the support that will be needed. Anybody who has conducted recruitment processes in recent years will know how time-sapping it is.

We will be working to ensure school leaders and staff don't just get financial allocations but actual administrative support to run those recruitment processes rather than it becoming yet another addition to already overwhelming workloads.

Let us be clear, the state government's declaration from multiple ministers demonstrates a welcome understanding of the vital importance of connection between schools and communities and the integration and availability of health services and supports for students with diverse needs.

We approach this trial with great enthusiasm. We need to make sure it succeeds and that requires full support both structurally, staff wise



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