Facing the Facts about strategic direction

A new plan for public education



Let's hope we see the development of a strategic plan for Western Australian public education that effectively responds to the findings and recommendations raised in three significant reports:

- *Agency Capability Department of Education; Executive Summary* (Public Sector Commission, 2024).
- *Understanding and Reducing the Workload of Teachers and Leaders in Western Australian Public Schools* (Hamilton and Robinson, 2023).
- *Facing the Facts; A Review of Public Education in Western Australia* (Lawrence et al, 2023).

There is strong alignment of many of the findings and recommendations of these reports and compelling evidence to support the SSTUWA's position in them and many other reputable sources.

Department of Education (DoE) Director General Jay Peckitt's commencement of a consultative process to develop the department's next strategic plan was a promising and welcome sign. Here is the opportunity for the DoE to fully respond to *Facing the Facts* by:

- Re-committing to a system of public education.
- Providing direction, services and support to schools and educators.
- Focusing on student outcomes as the principal and explicit objective of any changes to policy and practice.
- Engaging in effective change management.

Now is the time to address the concerns affirmed in the *Agency Capability Review*:

- Confusion about autonomy and being autonomous.
- The lack of system leadership and support.
- The need for better change management and communications.
- The impact of complex student needs coupled with inadequate resourcing and support for teachers and

school leaders.
- The need for a joined up human services response to complex needs.
- The need for a strategic approach for attraction and retention of public school educators.

In doing so, efforts to reduce the workload of teachers and school leaders must be front of mind.

Five coherent and aligned strategies could be the answer. Consistent with the three significant reviews cited, the current three priorities of quality teaching, behaviour management and mental health and wellbeing should be enhanced as complementary and mutually reinforcing strategies, implemented consistently with comprehensive system-focused workforce and capability strategies:

1. Quality teaching strategy.
2. Behaviour management strategy.
3. Mental health and wellbeing strategy.
4. Workforce strategy.
5. Capability strategy.

Implementation of the five core strategies should be the shared responsibility of all levels of the public education system, with the centre providing strong leadership and effective support.

Aligned and coherent action is needed to implement these strategies across the six areas of school and system improvement identified in *Facing the Facts*:

1. Strengthen support for teaching and learning.
2. Deepen student engagement.
3. Improve behaviour and reduce violence and aggression.
4. Address complex needs.
5. Strengthen Aboriginal education.
6. Strengthen system leadership.

Reduction of teacher and school leader workload needs to be a key focus in each.

Truly strengthening system leadership will require a change in organisational culture and behaviours, real action in response to the Workload Ministerial Taskforce and facing the fact that the profession, and therefore the system, is at breaking point.



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