Facing the Facts over the past two years

In 2022 the SSTUWA asked Dr Carmen Lawrence if she would be willing to chair an independent review into the state of public education in Western Australia.

Assured of independence, Dr Lawrence and a panel of experts comprised of Dr Scott Fitzgerald, Colin Pettit and Dr Robyn White (supported by Executive officer Pam Pollard) undertook the work.

The brief included a particular focus on the changes that had occurred in public education since 2010 and the effects they had on teachers' professional standing, workload, roles and responsibilities.

The explicit request was to suggest measures to improve teachers' working environments and job satisfaction so that more chose to stay in the profession and others saw teaching as an attractive career.

Then began a consultative process that sought the views of teachers, school leaders, parents and professional education organisations, through formal submissions and face-to-face meetings.

Thirty-five meetings were held across the state from the Kimberley to Esperance. At least one panel member attended each of these meetings.

In most locations, two meetings were held - the first with SSTUWA District Council delegates, followed by a second meeting open to all staff and members of the local community. Two online state-wide meetings were held for participants who were unable to attend face-to-face meetings.

The review received 127 oral and written submissions from individuals and groups from metropolitan, regional and remote areas within the state.

These submissions came from all types of public schools and from all school-related staff classifications as well as from parents, community members and university staff.

A further 27 written submissions were received from professional associations, SSTUWA school branches, unions, parent associations and universities.

One of the lasting memories from the process was the dedication teachers and school leaders showed toward their students and their deep concern about the detrimental effects of some recent education policies. They were there not just to identify faults, but to offer solutions.

In addition, the panel examined peer-reviewed research relevant to the terms of reference, as well as numerous government documents and inquiry reports.

That process led the review to deliver a report that was titled *Facing the Facts*.

That report declared significant change was urgently needed if we were to continue to provide quality public education suitable for all students as well as satisfying and rewarding careers for teachers in Western Australia.

Facing the Facts also made recommendations that the panel felt were practical and achievable.

Over the years we have seen many reviews disappear onto bookshelves to never be heard of again.

I am delighted this was not the case with *Facing the Facts*.

Even now we regularly see it mentioned in the media and in parliament. It is good to see that the report, based as it was in such a wide-reaching process, has been identified as placing public education front and centre in political and policy debates.

Many recommendations have seen significant direct actions implemented. Others still need following up. You can read a full

summary in the following pages.

I remember one teacher at the SSTUWA's State Council, where Dr Lawrence presented the report to delegates, very emotionally thanking the panel for making them feel heard for the first time in a very long while.

I hope *Facing the Facts* continues its developing legacy of ensuring those voices are consistently heard and acted upon into the future.

The panel members

Dr Carmen Lawrence AO, Chair

Former WA Premier and Treasurer, Minister for Education and Aboriginal Affairs; former federal Minister for Health and Human Services; Professor emerita at the University of Western Australia.

Dr Scott Fitzgerald

Associate professor in the School of Management and Marketing at Curtin University. A key focus of Scott's recent research has been the changing nature of governance, professionalism and work in the education sector.

Colin Pettit

Former Commissioner for Children and Young People of Western Australia and former Secretary of Education, Tasmania.

Dr Robyn White

Former secondary school teacher,
head of department, deputy principal, project manager (Central Office) and principal. Former lecturer and education consultant.

Pam Pollard, Executive officer

Former primary school teacher, former curriculum manager, former principal of independent public primary schools and principal fellow, Harvard Graduate School of Education.



By Matt Jarman
President

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