Facing the Facts from where we started



In 2022, Western Australia and the rest of the nation were still dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic and its impact on everyone's lives. Public educators, already overworked and stressed prior to the pandemic, were pushed even more to the limit during these times. WA's State of Emergency and the Public Health State of Emergency, in place since March 2020, were officially ended in November 2022. A month earlier an even more significant event saw the SSTUWA announce the Lawrence review into public education. This is what we said at the time:

The State School Teachers' Union of WA has appointed Dr Carmen Lawrence to head an independent review into the issues currently being faced by the public education system in WA.

The review will identify and examine the problems in the system, what effect they are having on teachers and school leaders and how those staff can be supported to improve public education in WA.

Dr Lawrence, who is a former Premier and Education Minister, will be joined on the expert panel by Dr Scott Fitzgerald from Curtin University, former Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit, and former Perth Modern principal Robyn White. Former Victoria Park Primary School principal Pamela Pollard will serve as the panel's executive officer.

(Then) SSTUWA President Pat Byrne (seen to the right with Dr Lawrence and then Senior Vice President Matt Jarman) said public education was at a crossroads and the inquiry was necessary to provide a positive way forward.

"There are many serious challenges facing the public education system including teacher and school leader shortages, disillusionment and excessive workloads," she said.

"We need to listen to what our teachers and school leaders are saying and have a close look at what is happening in our schools, why it is happening and what can be done to address it.

"The public system educates the majority of the children in WA and those children deserve the very best from a quality education system.

“I am confident the review panel will pinpoint the issues in the system and deliver workable solutions.”

The review will examine factors such as the effect of State Government policies on schools, the impact of COVID-19 and changes in reporting, expectations and accountability.

The panel will take evidence from national and international experts, as well as canvassing views from relevant stakeholder groups, including parent bodies.

The SSTUWA will also make a submission to the review.

“Red flags are flying. The warnings are clear. Those who know best realise public education is at a crossroads,” Ms Byrne said.

“There is a sense … that the voice of teachers and principals has been lost with the imposition of business and market models of education.

“This review is an opportunity for WA professionals to regain that voice.”

The panel is currently reviewing material and developing its reporting timeline and is expected to start taking written and face-to-face submissions in the new year.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026