Teachers must not be overburdened in anti-bullying response



The federal government's announcement of a $10 million package to support schools in tackling bullying is an important step forward, but support for teachers must not be overlooked, according to the Australian Education Union (AEU).

The suite of anti-bullying measures announced last month, including $5 million for new resources for teachers, students and parents, is welcome news, however, the AEU has emphasised that without meaningful systemic support for teachers, the broader goals of safer schools cannot be realised.

"Schools are reporting far higher levels of student mental health, wellbeing and behavioural issues," AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said.

"Teachers are on the front line when it comes to preventing and responding to bullying and they must be fully supported by governments in this important work.

"Providing materials and resources is important, but without investing in the people who deliver them through professional development and training, staffing, reduced workloads and proper support, the risk is that those resources will not be able to be used effectively in schools."

Overall, the AEU welcomes the Albanese Government's commitment to foster safer classroom environments.

All governments must work with teachers and education support staff to ensure they are adequately resourced to respond appropriately to bullying, especially given the increasing complexity of online and AI-mediated harassment.

This includes ensuring that all schools have a qualified school counsellor to support students and staff, along with allocation of time to address these issues, so that teachers, who are already overworked, are not expected to take on additional burdens.

In addition, proper allocation of funding to public schools more broadly is essential, so that schools already under resource

strain can take on anti-bullying initiatives without undermining core teaching and learning.

“From our members’ experience, many schools are stretched to the limit,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“Teachers are balancing large class sizes, increased administrative load, behaviour issues and wellbeing demands. Any new anti-bullying initiative must not add to that burden, it must relieve it.

“The AEU stands ready to work with the federal government, state and territory authorities and communities to roll out this new initiative. But to succeed, this must be backed with full funding and a clear commitment to supporting teachers and education support staff, as well as students.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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