

SSTUWA ramps up campaign against wages cap



The State School Teachers' Union of WA is ramping up its campaign against the State Government's public sector wages cap, as the current teacher shortage threatens to worsen.

School staff have had their wages increase capped at a \$1,000 a year for the last four years to enable the government to focus on repairing the state's budget.

SSTUWA president Pat Byrne said while the union commended the government on keeping the state safe from COVID, it was now sitting on the biggest surplus in its history, and it was time to axe the cap.

Ms Byrne called for the government to make a commitment in the mid-year economic review to axing the cap and addressing teacher shortages, or the union would keep all options on the table for when school returned in the new year.

"Our schools are facing a shortage of teachers and right now there is no guarantee there will be a teacher in front of every classroom at the start of Term One next year," she said.

"The worsening teacher shortage is putting the education of our children at risk. Fewer teachers means larger class sizes and less individual attention for students.

"Teacher shortages also mean unmanageable workloads and burnout for teachers, which will push even more teachers out of the profession."

Ms Byrne said while there were several factors contributing to the teacher shortage, the State Government's wages cap was making things worse.

"WA's public school teachers used to be the best paid in the country," she said. "Now they are among the worst paid, and our principals are the second lowest paid in the country.

"This is at a time when some mining companies are offering young people more than \$100,000 a year to go and work in the resources sector.

"With teachers' wages higher in other parts of Australia, and big wages on offer in the private sector, it's little wonder the State Government is finding it hard to retain and attract public school teachers.

"And, with 14 per cent of public-school teachers aged over 60 and approaching retirement, we'll have a crisis on our hands if we don't act now."

Ms Byrne said WA was also facing a shortage of TAFE lecturers.

"We are already seeing TAFE lecturers, particularly in trades, being lured to the private sector. If we don't see competitive wages in TAFE, more lecturers will leave."

The SSTUWA has today launched a second stage of their campaign to axe the cap, with ads to run on radio, digital, print and mobile billboards.

The General Agreements covering the wages of teachers and lecturers are due to expire this month.

Ms Byrne said the union was seeking a wage increase for its members of 4% and a return to genuine collective bargaining.

For more information on the campaign, go to: www.puttingourkidsfirst.com.au