



iEu News

So the Report on Education Workforce Initiatives has been released

www.educationworkforce.wa.gov.au and it confirms what we know.

While there are “high levels of appreciation from parents and the community in general”, it is teachers who are most critical of their status and see it reflected in “low” salaries, “poor” working conditions and a hostile press.

The Report notes that changes to public education salaries, allowances and conditions tend to flow to the Catholic and Independent school sectors (*Ed: this is by no means automatic – improvements are achieved through the efforts of IEU members*).

Remuneration

The Report recommended “an immediate and significant investment in public teacher and lecturer remuneration that will:

- improve the relative position of teaching in relation to other professions
- recognise the value of the education workforce within the community
- provide an adequate return on investment (i.e. four-year tertiary qualified)” (Rec 1.1).

While no quantum was recommended the Report should prove valuable to the State School Teachers’ Union in the arbitration of their dispute.

Workloads

Chapter 7 on Workloads could have been plagiarised from any IEU claim for an Enterprise Agreement; more support staff to reduce the administrative and classroom burden, appropriate behaviour management processes and improved resourcing of the inclusive classroom.

Included in an extensive list of tasks that could be assigned elsewhere are yard, bus and car park duties, purchasing of resources, collecting money and invigilating examinations (p.52).

Of significant concern to the IEU is that a solution to the workloads issues is to alter the structure of the working year to allow for activities such as planning before and after student arrival each term (Rec 7.2). (*Ed: In other words, not to lighten the load but to spread it into vacation periods.*)

Support Staff

A notable theme throughout the Report was the need for more support staff and for those staff to be properly remunerated. The Report viewed support staff as critical in providing administrative and classroom support, health, psychological and pastoral care through to appealing and safe school grounds (*Ed: as does the IEU*). Rec 2.8 is that the Minister “Introduces an expanded school structure which will raise (a) the number and (b) the status of support staff and provide a satisfying and worthwhile career path, freeing principals and teachers to focus on pedagogy.”

Further, that the Minister “Supports teachers by revising the existing ratio in public schools of educational psychologists to students, and examines the role of social workers as additional support.” (Rec 7.7)

What is Not in the Report?

Notable for its omission in the context of retaining teachers was any mention of teaching loads.

A number of submissions referred to salaries once being tied to those of backbenchers; many teachers making that submission will recall a time when a normal secondary load was 4 classes.

Nor was there an exploration of reduced teaching loads for graduate teachers or for those reaching retirement whose valuable skills might be utilised elsewhere; as a mentor for example.

Further, there was no discussion around class sizes. A precursor for retention must be reasonable hours and workloads - class sizes combined with the number of classes are the major determinant of workloads.

Will Catholic and Independent schools benefit?

IEU members will be very interested in whether the Minister increases funding for salaries in public schools, both for teachers and support staff.

Increases in public school funding by State Governments have a direct and positive impact on Federal and State funding to Catholic and Independent Schools. However, there is no obligation on a private school employer to replicate the salaries and conditions of the public sector.

IEU members should remind their colleagues that any “flow on” has come about through IEU membership and that present conditions are the result of past actions; the Palm Sunday Rally in Catholic schools and the “work to rule” in Anglican Community Schools to name just two.

It is the continuing growth and capacity of the IEU membership to negotiate with their employer that brings about improvements.

Theresa Howe
Secretary

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