



Strength | Support | Fellowship

ABN: 75 019 162 710

12 August 2022

The Hon Mark McGowan  
Premier of Western Australia  
13<sup>th</sup> Floor, Dumas House  
2 Havelock St  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Premier

Your letter to public sector workers (11 August) outlining the revised government wages policy and your view of Government initiatives and achievements pertaining to the public sector workforce deserves a response. While some sections of the public sector have benefited from the initiatives you describe, the Principals Federation of WA has a different view, particularly in relation to the impact of your government's policies on public school leaders since your election in 2017.

Since that time public school leaders have endured a wages policy which has penalised them unfairly and seen their real wages in comparison with other employee categories eroded to the point where established relativities that recognised the responsibilities and accountabilities associated with school leadership have been distorted to such an extent as to make the school leader's role unattractive. A review of the wages policy to allow for a 3% per annum increase over two years does little to rectify the damage you inflicted. Nor does it keep pace with other jurisdictions across Australia who have recognised that to attract good teachers into school leader roles there needs to be an incentive built into the remuneration package. When are you going to recognise that?

To add insult to injury you quote a raft of reforms in relation to leave entitlements that benefit some, but add to the stress of school leadership at a time where staff shortages are proving nigh impossible to overcome. The membership of the PFWA has borne the brunt of the crisis facing schools as a result of the pandemic, however, it has simply shone a spotlight on problems facing public education that have been recognised for a number of years, but which your government has refused to address. For their outstanding work during this time, school leaders have received little or no recognition or reward.

During the recent bargaining period for a replacement Agreement for Education Act employees the PFWA presented a log of claims which it believed would be discussed in good faith. Aside from the need to redress the long-term effects of wages policy, the log of claims presented strategies to address concerns about the health and well-being of school leaders which, because of the demands and expectations placed on them, was seen to be seriously under threat. The two offers presented by the DoE did not meet in any way the

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requirements of this membership, so they were declined, with the belief that bargaining would continue in good faith. This belief, however, was proven to be misguided given that good faith bargaining morphed into “take it or leave it”.

The attitude of your government towards school leaders has resulted in many of them beginning to question whether they need to endure this anymore. The reforms which you describe have not had a positive impact on the role of school leaders, in fact much of it has resulted in increased workload and stress, leaving many of them feeling unsupported and under-valued. An example of this is the current workers’ compensation cap. As it is applied now, school leaders at Level 4 and above are penalised if they claim workers compensation, as the annualised cap is well below the salary afforded them through the Agreement. This needs to be addressed if we are to be totally fair to all sections of the workforce.

Premier, school leaders have been frequently told by the Director-General that they are the most important leaders in the public education system. However, being told that means nothing if your government’s policies do not back that up. We appreciate your final comment which acknowledges the hard work of public sector employees, however, there is one group, that is school leaders, who have borne more of a load than most. I hope you recognise that school leaders are the ones who set the conditions in schools for all staff, students and the broader school community to thrive and they deserve more than an empty thankyou at the conclusion of your letter.

Yours sincerely



Bevan Ripp  
President