

John Castrilli MLA



Representing the people of Bunbury

AT this time of year I look forward to attending school graduations and end of year celebrations. For me it is the most uplifting time of year, watching our city's promising youth on show for their proud parents and school communities.

It also presents a welcome opportunity to meet the teachers - those who have been entrusted with the enormous responsibility of shaping and educating these students.

The look on their faces illustrates the personal satisfaction they get from their work.

However after witnessing this, I have also seen and heard about the darker side of the profession in WA.

While personal satisfaction remains, our teachers are experiencing a dwindling level of professional satisfaction.

It is clear to me that our teachers are disillusioned and if this continues, degradation of our formerly high public education standards is the most likely outcome.

A lack of resources and support, too few powers to discipline and a teacher shortage are just some of the serious issues facing education services in this State.

The further your head from Perth, the worse these issues become.

Just recently we were made aware that Year 11 students with a passion for English will bear the brunt of such issues with the withdrawal of TER English Literature from Bunbury's two major public high schools next year.

Again, like we have seen in the health system, our postcode is determining what level of services we will receive.

When you combine this issue with the mass of other daily hurdles confronting the teaching profession, it is not surprising to hear that a shortfall of 600 teachers is forecast for the start of next year.

On top of this massive shortfall, a survey released this year by the Department of Premier and Cabinet identified that 31 per cent of primary school teachers intend to retire within the next five years along with 38 per cent of secondary school teachers.

When I was at school, teaching was one of the most highly-respected professions.

Sadly this message is no longer being sent to our children as the system continues to disregard teachers' needs.

I am disappointed that the State Government has ignored the countless alarm bells for so many years.

Their only action has been knee-jerk responses that fail to meet the profession's basic need for respect and support.

To remedy this looming crisis it is time to listen to these warnings, heed teachers' requests and take the lead in restoring our teachers' rights.

Today they do still get personal satisfaction as they watch their students step up to graduate but in all fairness that is not enough.

It is high time the State Government equips the profession with the tools needed to retain their personal satisfaction and, at long last, reclaim professional satisfaction.

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