

SCHOOLS — TEACHER WELLBEING

687. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the Insurance Commission of Western Australia's 2023 annual report, which shows that WA state school teachers made up nearly half of the state's compensation claims, and the fact that our incredible and dedicated teaching staff are some of the lowest paid in the country, despite the government's \$4.2 billion surplus. Considering WA teachers and principals are among the lowest paid in the country and with teacher assistants being paid as little as \$28 an hour, when will the minister practically demonstrate their value and increase their pay?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

I do not think the member for Roe has the premise of his question correct. Teachers do not tell me that increasing pay will reduce their stress. Teaching is a stressful profession. Teaching is hard. But teaching is also a great profession. I am a former teacher. The member for Hillarys and the member for Collie–Preston are former teachers, and I am sure there are others here.

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. Johnston: And the Speaker.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Of course—the Speaker! They would all say that teaching is hard and teaching is stressful, but it is a great profession. This is not a new issue. Back in 1987, there was a report by a joint committee inquiry into teacher stress appointed by the Minister for Education; Planning in Western Australia. There has always been teacher stress. That is not new. It will never go away. However, what we are doing as a government, and what I am doing as a minister, is trying to help and support teachers. We have instigated many, many initiatives in that respect. As I mentioned yesterday, I commissioned the department to conduct a red tape review to reduce the red tape that teachers and principals have to administer. Wherever I go throughout Western Australia I am told that teachers and principals are incredibly pleased that I have instigated that.

Some time ago I also announced enhanced antiviolenace measures. We told the principals and teachers, “We have your back.” Every principal I have spoken to since that day, and the unions, have said, “Thank you, minister. Thank you, Cook Labor government, for supporting us and having our back.” We want to instigate measures to try to alleviate online and face-to-face abuse. In 1987 we did not have online abuse. That has been one of the greatest problems that teachers and principals have to deal with—that is, online abuse by parents. I made it quite clear in the antiviolenace measures that I announced that we will not stand for that anymore. Another thing that teachers have to deal with—I had an education forum in the electorate of Hillarys yesterday—are emails. We know that as members of Parliament we get emails at all times of the night and even early morning. I am speaking to teaching professionals about that and what would be the expectation. I look forward to introducing some measures with respect to that.

The government is undertaking many measures to support our teachers. Going back to the premise of the member's question about pay and stress and saying that WA teachers are the lowest paid of their profession in Australia, he is wrong. Graduate teachers are the third highest paid in Australia. Senior teachers are the second highest paid.

You are very wrong. Get your facts right!