



General Media Enquires

P: (08) 9323 3800

(request Publicity Office)

F: (08) 9323 3878

E: publicity@cpsucsa.org

Tuesday September 18, 2012

Government needs to invest more in school IT services

It is not surprising an audit has uncovered 219 WA public schools with unlicensed software according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

CPSU/CSA Branch Secretary Toni Walkington said the Barnett Government had failed to provide adequate funding and resources for properly-run information technology (IT) systems.

“If schools had a dedicated IT support person they would be able to monitor these situations,” Ms Walkington said.

She said schools were increasingly dependent on technology for curriculum and administration duties but the lack of support was an ongoing issue and getting worse.

“Most schools are not allocated IT staff and they can’t afford to employ IT support officers which puts added pressure on other staff.

“Schools without IT support struggle to cope with workload with teachers, principals and other staff relied upon to do the extra work.

“IT support officers who are employed at schools are usually on a fixed-term contract because there is no funding allocated and schools pull in the money from other budget areas.”

The CPSU/CSA has joined forces with the State School Teachers’ Union of WA (SSTUWA), the WA Council of State School Organisations, the WA Primary Principals’ Association and the WA Secondary Schools Executives Association to form the Technology in Public Schools Alliance.

The alliance is calling for the government to employ IT support officers in schools at a ratio of one officer for every 200 computers, provide funding for updated IT systems and infrastructure and funding for IT training for all school staff.

They will be meeting with Education Minister on September 19.

Footnote: An Education and Health Parliamentary Inquiry, headed by Independent MP Janet Woollard, was held earlier this year with one of the focuses being the current and future resourcing challenges of eLearning.

The committee recommended the Department of Education contract an independent party to assess workload and what resources would be required (how many positions and at what classification) to meet demand.

Its final report will be tabled by the end of November 2012.

FOR COMMENT:

Toni Walkington
CPSU/CSA Branch Secretary
9323 3800

FOR INFORMATION:

Darren O'Dea
CPSU/CSA Media Liaison Officer
M: 0421 934 794
P: (08) 9323 3855
E: darren.odea@cpsucsa.org

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