Independent Education Union of Australia

Speaks on...

2 April 2025

Less than a week into the election campaign and teacher bashing and ugly education blame games have begun

IEU members and the families in our school communities rightly expect the election campaign to focus on delivering a world class education system; however, the public debate has already degenerated into teacher bashing and the lazy politics of education blame games.

The leader of the federal opposition Peter Dutton has threatened to sack thousands of federal education department staff, claimed students are being 'indoctrinated" and flagged that a future coalition government would take back control of what teachers teach.

The complex challenges in schools and early childhood education require an expert, professional dialogue free from partisan attacks. Sadly, the public comments this week seem designed to ignite ugly cultural wars for political benefit, at the cost of well-considered education policies.

Slashing funding or jobs from education is simplistic and short-sighted

The idea that thousands of jobs could be cut from the Education Department without impacting school operations is fanciful. While the IEU does not represent departmental staff, their work has a direct impact on the operation of non-government schools and early childhood education.

The department oversees $19.1 billion dollars of funding to non-government schools every year.

Targeted support measures to tackle student disadvantage, academic outcomes and wellbeing are the core principles of government programs such as the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement.

For the first time, the department is applying work impact tests to all *Better and Fairer Schools* reforms and has been collaborating with the IEU to find new ways to clarify and reduce teacher workload.

There is much to do to repair the education system. Positive changes will require adequate staffing and resourcing not only in schools, but also in the department overseeing and funding the reforms.

Teachers are not political punching bags

Mr Dutton's proposed takeover of the school curriculum is yet another attack on the autonomy and judgment of the teaching profession. It's an unwelcome return to the dark days of teacher bashing.

Rather than focusing on unfounded claims of 'indoctrination' in universities and schools, the federal opposition should be talking with the profession about how we can better support graduate teachers as they begin their teaching career.

Governments and political candidates should be focused on how they can help to attract, support and retain our next generation of teachers.

These are the discussions that need to happen, not unnecessary and inflammatory distractions.

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IEU - represents 75,000 teachers, principals and support staff in faith based, community & independent schools, pre-schools, kindergartens and early childhood education centres and post-secondary centres across Australia.