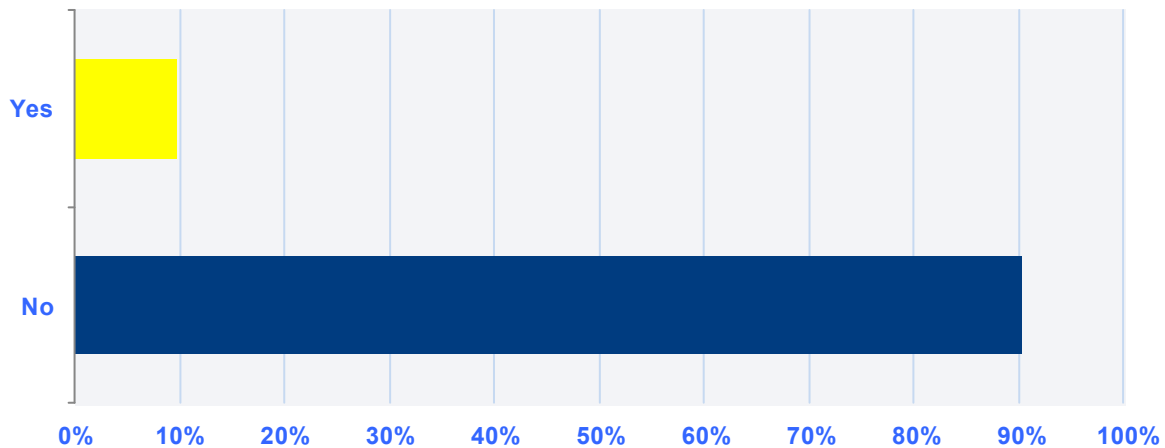




Will Increasing Fines Reduce School Absenteeism?



The Weatherill Government has announced what it says are the most 'significant changes to education in 40 years'. Changes revolve around extending and raising fines for truancy and banning trespassers.

The government is also asking if principals should be able to hire and fire teachers. SAASSO recently asked what parents and educators thought.

Overall, 55% of respondents want principals to hire and fire teachers:

- 51.65% of principals
- 66.67% of deputy principals
- 48.48% of teachers
- 46.67% of SSOs
- 58.98% of parents who don't work in a school

Parents are most supportive of the idea - wanting to ensure the best teachers for their children. Teachers were least supportive - some concerned about the standard of other teachers, with others worried about nepotism and bullying.

Principals were evenly split. Comments showing equal concern for being able to remove underperforming teachers, while being worried about legal and human resource ramifications. Principals also expressed concern about increased workload.

There was across the board condemnation of the use of fines to deal with truancy - with comments labelling it harmful, out of date and ill-considered.

- 84.05% oppose schools issuing on the spot fines.
- 91.33% oppose increasing fines.

When asked if increasing fines will reduce school absences:

- 7.14% replied 'yes - it sends a clear message'
- 92.86 replied 'no - it will hurt families already struggling'.

100% of principals say increasing fines will not work.

Principals cite poor relationships with teachers, disadvantage, family events & family illness as causes of absence.

Teachers cite dissatisfaction with school, school size, disadvantage and bullying as the main causes.

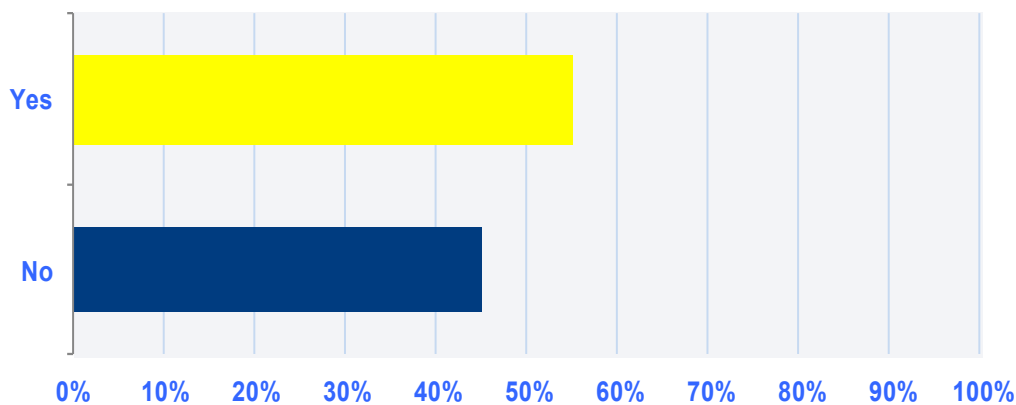
Parents (non school employees) cite poor relationships with teachers, dissatisfaction with school, bullying & special needs as the main causes.

80.83% of respondents believe more in-school support is a better idea than fines.

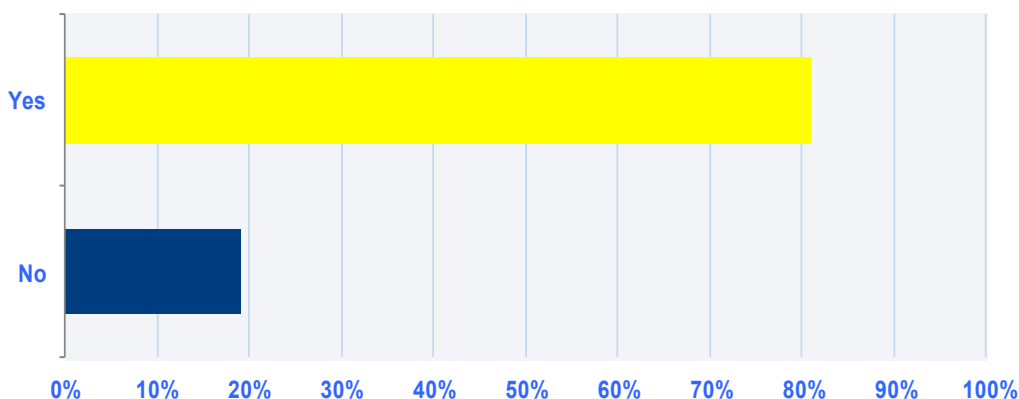
“...as an educator it is genuinely worrying that our state government thinks these type of draconian measures will result in any improvement.”



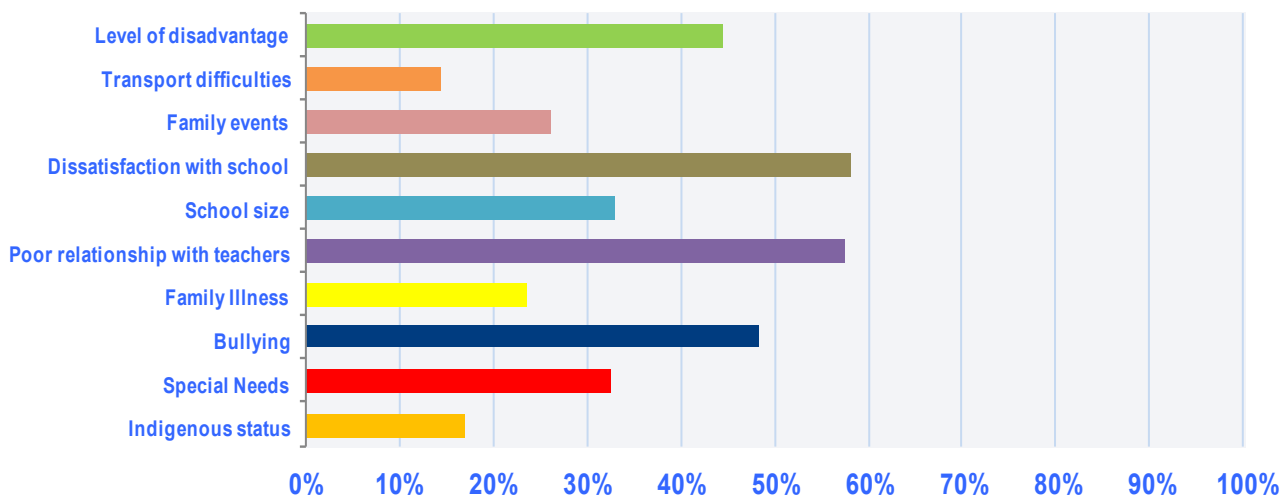
Should principals be able to hire and fire teachers?



Would more in-school support (such as counsellors) be a better idea than fines?



Aside from student illness, what are the major causes of absenteeism?



Selected Comments



Financial penalties are the solution of the weak minded. The problem is not truancy, truancy is the symptom.

For principals to have sole power to hire and fire is just asking for abuse of power. Especially since we currently have many principals who are either bullies, poorly trained, or both.

Children of lower socio-economic status are already at a disadvantage, and to impose these ridiculously high fines will only serve to increase absences from school.

There are a small minority of teachers who are letting down the whole profession. Principals should be able to fire teachers who are seriously underperforming.

My special needs child's school has made it clear they don't want my child. Is Weatherill now going to fine me for it?

Some parents do not care if their children are in school or not. Parents do not respect schools and their decisions.

I believe we should support families and children to minimise truancy and encourage attendance - not fine them using a punitive approach or "stick" methodology.

If teachers are engaging and have good relationship with students they would be less likely to be absent however Parents MUST be held accountable.

Weatherill must be joking! Corporal punishment and fining parents? That's all he can come up with?

Weatherill has closed so many public schools that we have to travel three times as far to drop our children off and pick them up. The regional school bus service is also a joke.

Ideally Principals should have the ability to select and remove staff. However, from my experience there is a risk that some Principals will abuse this level of autonomy.

Principals should have the right to hire but not fire as the industrial instruments around firing are very legalistic and Principals are not HR experts or IR lawyers.

Principals hide nepotism already, they don't need a licence to fire current teachers and then hire friends and family.

Too many kids crammed into one school so that Weatherill can save money in working class suburbs. You've forgotten who elected you Jay.

Schools will need inhouse lawyers if we are expected to sack bad teachers.

Bullying and sexual victimisation is out of control in our public schools. I'm a teacher and my daughter is in a private school. Keeping your child home is sometimes the only responsible thing you can do as a parent.

Fix the schools Jay! Then maybe kids won't be afraid to attend.

A racist plan. We all know who misses school the most.

Disengagement is a complex issue. It's both distressing and laughable that premier Weatherill thinks you can financially bully people into overcoming difficulties.

Giving principals power to hire and fire could lead to nepotism which is already a problem in some schools.

Fining people who are dysfunctional or struggling is a stupid response in my opinion.

Biggest change in 40 years? What a joke.

Jay has destroyed our public schools. It's not safe to leave your kids there and now he is blaming parents???

I really don't see that fines will be effective. I suspect absenteeism is predominant within a certain socio-economic-cultural band and these people don't often have sufficient money to pay school fees so debts get written off by schools.

The Principal knows first hand if a teacher is not performing adequately/responsibly and not doing their job in the best interested of our children and should be able to fire a teacher.

Hire and fire yes but done quickly, fairly and for the kids. It would have saved a lot of grief in the small school my children attended. A poor teacher in a small school is devastating.

Parents need support and education about the importance of education rather than punishment and fines. A punitive approach to dealing with social problems is rarely, if ever, successful.

If a \$500 fine is not working then \$5000 is pointless...most families can't afford the former let alone the latter!

Good luck collecting fines.

Find out the reasons behind the truancy.

The last thing that should be done is to further disadvantage our already disadvantaged. Support is the answer.

Principals need the powers to fire teachers who are seriously under performing. No one benefits from those teachers who are not performing especially the students.

Weatherill should spend more time doing his job and less telling parents how to do their's.

Weatherill trying to score political points beating up working class parents. For shame.

Short-sighted political ploy.

What a moronic idea! How are we supposed to build relationships with the families of at-risk students if we are prosecuting them?

Fines will damage the already strained relationship between schools and the parents of the most at risk students.

As a principal something needs to be done about the quality of teachers and the suitability of those placed in our schools. However, principals will come under even more pressure.

And once Weatherill has forced every child into these substandard schools then what? Will they suddenly become safe from sexual abuse, violence, bullying? Will naplan scores miraculously jump?

As an educator it is genuinely worrying that our state government thinks these type of draconian measures will result in any improvement.