



MEDIA RELEASE

TEACHER WORKFORCE ROUNDTABLE: EDUCATION UNIONS CALL NATIONAL PLAN TO FIX TEACHER SHORTAGES

THURSDAY, 11 AUGUST 2022

The Australian Education Union and the Independent Education Union of Australia have jointly called for a national plan to tackle the ongoing teacher shortage crisis across Australia ahead of Friday's teacher workforce roundtable with education ministers.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe and IEUA Federal Secretary Christine Cooper described the roundtable as a crucial opportunity for Ministers to engage with the teaching profession via their unions to address the ongoing issues impacting on the education sector.

Both the AEU and the IEUA represent over a quarter of a million teachers, principals and education support staff collectively across the country.

The AEU and the IEUA will use the forum to highlight the causes of the acute and ongoing teacher workforce crisis and call for a national teacher workforce plan to address the issues. Central to the workforce plan must be ongoing consultation with education unions to identify the short term and long-term strategies that can be implemented for the benefit of the workforce and the students.

This plan must have respect and recognition at the centre for both new and existing teachers across schools and early childhood education settings.

A recent government survey of 18,000 teachers showed that teachers are working an average of 57 hours per week. 82 per cent of teachers surveyed said that their workload has increased since March 2020, indicating that COVID-19 has exacerbated teacher workloads to alarming levels.

Simply attracting new teachers will not resolve the underlying issues of unsustainable workloads, stagnating pay and conditions, insecure work and inadequate professional development opportunities for the teaching workforce.

The two education unions have warned that quick fix responses such as sending unqualified teachers into classrooms will have long term consequences for both teachers and students and will aggravate early career burnout.

Quotes attributable to Correna Haythorpe, Australian Education Union Federal President:

"We're pleased that Min. Clare has established a process to work collaboratively with teachers, principals and education support staff through their unions to proactively look for solutions to address the workforce crisis

“The State of our Schools survey conducted by the AEU showed 61 per cent of principals across Australia’s public schools experienced teacher shortages last year, compared to 47 per cent in 2020.

“Concerningly, 73 per cent of low socio-economic status (SES) schools reported teacher shortages, compared to 33 per cent of high SES schools.

“Teacher shortages are escalating at an unprecedented pace. If we want to find a sustainable solution for this crisis, we need to shift our focus from short-term fixes to long term reform.

“We need measures in place that will raise the status of the teaching profession, attract new, fully qualified teachers into the profession and retain and support the existing workforce.

“Our members across the nation have been campaigning for better salaries, greater professional support, reduced workloads and more job security. Now is the time to make this happen.”

Quotes attributable to Christine Cooper, Independent Education Union of Australia Federal Secretary:

“The IEUA welcomes the opportunity to work with the Labor Federal Government to bring about change that supports existing teachers and encourages more to enter the profession.

“For over a decade, education policy has been dictated by actors external to the realities of schools. The voice of the profession has been excluded and as a result existing education policies do not support nor reflect the realities of the profession, nor of the needs of schools.

“Our members will tell you that unsustainable workloads created by unreasonable demands and unnecessary duplication, along with stagnated salaries are the key reasons behind burnout and why they are choosing to leave the profession.

“We now need meaningful reforms that target areas of student and teacher needs, not quick fix solutions like sending large numbers of unqualified, inexperienced staff into schools just to plug holes in front of classes.

“The voice of the profession can now guide the way forward to repair a broken system.

“We look forward to discussing how we can solve the staffing crisis by supporting early career and existing teachers with improved pay rates, working conditions and enhanced career paths over the long term.”

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