



8 August 2023

New school initiatives should first satisfy workload impact test

IEU members continue to highlight the driving factor behind staff shortages and record levels of teacher burnout – unsustainable workloads and work intensification continue to force dedicated teachers from their profession.

Our teachers need a circuit breaker to reset work expectations and end the flow of additional tasks and add-on duties. The first step is to ensure that any new initiative or project is subject to a teacher workload impact assessment.

Renewed efforts to recruit more teachers into schools will serve as only stop-gap measures until we force a major employer rethink on workload. One in five new teachers are leaving their career in their first three years. [Less than 30% of teachers plan to stay in teaching](#) until retirement age.

An important safeguard against growing administrative tasks and compliance red tape is to ensure that any proposed initiative or reform is tested against a teacher workload assessment. The federal government is on the right track with their requirement for such assessments to apply to changes in the next [National School Reform Agreement \(NSRA\)](#).

But we need to go further and extend a comprehensive work impact lens beyond just the NSRA.

All government and employer initiatives should be subject to the same test. Unless a proposal is neutral in terms of workload impacts, or includes confirmed workload offsets, it should not proceed.

Our union has provided detailed advice to the government in developing the NSRA workload assessment tool and the areas where the tool is badly needed such as data collection, learning targets and new student health and wellbeing projects. [Our union's public submission](#) calls for the tool to be extended across all school operations.

An effective and enforceable workload impact assessment should include:

- A clear understanding that any new initiative that negatively impacts teacher workload, or fails to mitigate or offset workload impacts, will not proceed.
- New initiatives should be reviewed against existing activities to ensure they don't duplicate work already being done. Can current initiatives be re-purposed or altered for the same outcome?
- Consideration of whether additional teachers, support staff or resources are needed to implement the initiative. Will teachers need more release time or professional development time?
- Following the initial implementation, what medium or long-term support measures will be needed by teachers to maintain the initiative?

Workload escalates over time as task overlays are added and nothing is taken away, we need long-term planning and meaningful employer commitments to break the workload cycle.