



7 August 2003

## TREASURERS MUST SOLVE TEACHER SHORTAGE

Australian Education Union leadership from around Australia will meet in Melbourne today to discuss the national teacher shortage and recent pay offers from state governments. They are calling on State treasurers, who are also gathering today, to take a national approach to addressing this serious issue.

The meeting is a result of insulting pay offers in NSW, Victoria, ACT & Western Australia flowing from a previous decision adopted by state treasurers to cut pay rises to less than 3%.

Pat Byrne, Federal President of the Australian Education Union, said the State Labor Governments should honour election promises to make public education their top priority.

"When the State Treasurers meet, improving education should head their agenda. These governments were strongly supported on this issue and the public expects them to invest appropriately in public education.

Instead of talking about capping teachers' salaries with offers below the inflation rate they should be discussing how they can attract more teachers to the profession and reduce class sizes," said Ms Byrne.

Ms Byrne said the teacher shortage was reaching a crisis point and State Governments must work together to ensure there would be enough qualified teachers in the coming decade to meet demand.

"There are already shortages in regional and rural schools and in specific subject areas. By 2005 we estimate there will be a national shortfall of 5000 teachers, and this could rise to 25,000 by the end of the decade if nothing is done now.

We have research which shows young teachers are leaving the profession in alarming numbers for other careers. This coincides with the imminent retirement of many senior teachers.

If State Governments want to prevent a crisis in public education they must start being realistic about teacher wage increases," said Ms Byrne.

The AEU is calling on the State Treasurers to meet with the AEU leadership to discuss national & state strategies on how to attract and keep teachers in the profession.

If the treasurers fail to address the serious issues schools will face, the Union says a day of action on September 17 is likely to go ahead in line with calls from a number of states and territories.

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

Time: 11.30am

Where: AEU Federal Office  
120 Clarendon Street  
Southbank, Victoria, 3006

Spokespeople: Pat Byrne, AEU Federal President

Mary Bluett, AEU Victorian Branch President

Clive Haggard, AEU ACT Branch Secretary

Maree O'Halloran, New South Wales Teachers' Federation President

Darcel Moyle, Federal Aboriginal Education Officer, representing AEU Northern Territory Branch

Julie-Ann McCullough, Queensland Teachers' Union President

Chris Waugh, AEU South Australian Branch President

Mike Poate, AEU Tasmanian Branch President

**For further information, please contact:**

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