



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

Ground Floor, 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria, 3006
Phone : +61 (0)3 9693 1800 Fax : +61 (0)3 9693 1805
Email : aeu@aeufederal.org.au Website : www.aeufederal.org.au

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Pay and conditions the real issues to attract and retain teachers.

The Australian Education Union has opposed changes to sex discrimination laws to attract male teachers saying they reflect the Government's unwillingness to recognise the real issues affecting teachers.

AEU Federal President Pat Byrne said only constructive policy from all levels of Government can avert a chronic teacher shortage and improve the status of the teaching profession.

"Better pay, improved conditions, reduced class sizes and a parity between the states are the only answers to increasing the numbers of men in education and addressing the overall looming teacher shortage across the country.

"In 10 years, one third of teachers across the country will be at retirement age - for all the political smokescreens employed by this Federal Government this fact is not going to go away. Replacements for these teachers will not be able to be recruited and retained until working conditions and the status of teaching is improved.

Research quite clearly shows the reasons given for not choosing teaching relate to status, salaries and working conditions and, for men, child protection issues. The high numbers of new teachers who leave the profession within the first five years of beginning teaching, confirm these reasons.

"This announcement made by Dr. Nelson yesterday is nothing more than a knee jerk reaction – a short term response which will not address the underlying issues - and it highlights just how out of touch the Federal Government is with teachers and the state of education across the country," Ms. Byrne said.

For further information, please contact:

Meaghan Telford
Media
0409 510 879