



**PROFESSIONAL PAY AND QUALITY
TEACHING FOR AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE:
THE AEU PROPOSAL**

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Teachers have a vital role to play

Australia's public school teachers have a vital role to play in preparing future generations of students for successful lives as individuals and as members of a decent and prosperous society. The nation's students in general perform well in international tests but poor results by a minority of students are linked to growing inequity in Australian schools.

School teachers and support staff are essential to educational success and all educators support improved educational outcomes for their students. It is in that spirit that the Australian Education Union makes this constructive proposal to link professional standards of teaching with improved salaries to improve teaching and learning in our public schools.

Quality teaching, professional pay and the resources to provide them are the means to improve our public schools and the outcomes for students. This is vital to them, their parents and Australia's future.

Attracting teachers to the profession and retaining them in our classrooms is becoming increasingly difficult. In fact secondary teaching has become an occupation listed as suffering a skills shortage for the purpose of recruiting from overseas. Teachers' salaries fall behind other professionals, particularly after the first 5-10 years of teaching. While salary increments for beginning teachers are essential to recognise growing skills and knowledge, there is no career option for teachers but to move to administrative and leadership roles after approximately 8-10 years.

A research report commissioned by the Federal Government, "Rewarding Quality Teaching" found that there was widespread support from employers and the community for improved rewards for high performing teachers.

The AEU supports a professional standards-linked career reform to further recognise and enhance the high quality of teaching which students need to meet the challenges of the future. The only way this can be brought to fruition is through negotiation between employers and unions in each school system with funding provided by the Federal Government. The AEU is prepared to negotiate new classifications where there is a genuine commitment by governments to properly fund new positions underpinned by standards. Thus far the Federal Government has not funded improvements in the salaries of accomplished teachers.

The AEU Proposal for Professional Pay

The Australian Education Union supports a Professional Pay scheme to reward experienced teachers through recognition of their teaching knowledge and practice. Such reform would recognise and encourage professional excellence and help to attract and retain the best teachers in our classrooms.

The scheme would establish a set of professional standards for teaching beyond current processes. Teachers would be assessed by an objective and fair process and rewarded through salary increases, not one-off cash bonuses. Teachers would be required to demonstrate how their teaching experience and professional development is contributing to the improvement of educational outcomes for students.

The scheme would be funded by additional recurrent funding for public schools from both the federal and state/territory governments.

The newly established Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has proposed national professional standards for teachers at four levels: Initial Education, Band 1 Graduate, Band 2 Proficient, Band 3 Highly Accomplished and Leadership. The standards are organized into three domains: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. The general

approach of the Institute represents a consolidation of existing practice in most states and territories and is consistent with AEU policy.

How would the scheme work?

The standards to be attained are relevant to teaching and the roles teachers perform. The assessment of teachers would be conducted by peer-based independent panels to consider each applicant's application for recognition and accreditation as an Accomplished Teacher.

Teachers would be required to demonstrate how their teaching experience and professional development is contributing to the improvement of educational outcomes for students.

Professional Teaching Conditions

Teacher quality is a key to successful learning in our schools, but the performance of teachers cannot be separated from the conditions under which they teach.

In a national survey of school principals conducted by the AEU over 60% reported problems with teacher supply. One third reported classes with over 30 students at their schools and over 70% reported their schools needed a major upgrade of teaching facilities.

Educational settings in which class sizes are too large, where facilities and buildings are inadequate or where the teacher is overworked due to excessive contact time and lack of support militate against good quality teaching and student learning. Improved employment standards and training of additional support staff are essential to the success of this proposal.

Professional teaching conditions and the funding to achieve them are an absolute condition on which the AEU insists for the negotiation of professional career reform. These should be included in a comprehensive package and incorporated into collectively bargained agreements as appropriate.

The difference between Professional Pay and Performance Pay

Professional Pay is a reform proposal to ensure that quality teaching is the right of all students in public schools. The AEU will not support performance pay schemes which link student test scores to salaries. These have repeatedly been shown to fail where they have been tried, notably in the US.

The Federal Government engaged the Australian Council for Educational Research to undertake a comprehensive study of international experience. The Council reported:

"In summary, many pay for performance schemes have been tried over at least 150 years, and most have failed because they have not gained the support of the stakeholders who are most closely involved in the processes, most notably teachers and school administrators. The legacy of these failed attempts lingers in school cultures where teacher scepticism is deeply entrenched."

The AEU's Professional Pay proposal will help to ensure that quality teaching in public schools contributes to successful student outcomes and to Australia's future. To succeed, the proposal requires funding by the Federal and state/territory governments to raise salaries and to address issues like class sizes, workload, tenure, support staff, professional development and school infrastructure in a comprehensive improvement plan.

The AEU represents over 180,000 teachers and allied staff in all states and territories, together with its associated bodies the NSW Teachers Federation, Queensland Teachers Union and State School Teachers Union of Western Australia.