

Recognise, reward, retain

The federal government is on notice from both teachers and business that better salaries and career structures are urgently needed.

Government funding is needed to create a new national classification scheme and career structure to help attract and retain accomplished teachers, according to the AEU. The union has proposed a new salary band that would see teachers paid at least \$100,000 per year.

A new classification of 'accomplished teacher' could be based on a set of standards that have been validated by an independent study commissioned by the AEU. The study, conducted by Educational Assessment Australia at the University of New South Wales, examined standards already in use across the states.

The AEU has long called for the reform of career structures to better reward and recognise highly accomplished teachers in the classroom. Now the union has been joined by business in calling for higher salaries for teachers.

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Earlier this year the Business Council of Australia demanded more than \$4 billion extra funding for teachers salaries (see box). “Nobody can believe that capping the top salary for classroom

teachers at about \$70,000 places enough value on the enormous contribution they make to the future prosperity of our nation,” the chairman of the BCA’s Education, Skills and Innovation Task Force, Hutch Ranck said in a statement.

Beyond the worsening teacher shortage and the need for competitive salaries, the AEU’s long held professional pay policy also calls for a new career structure that further recognises and appropriately



Teachers are key, says business

Higher salaries would recognise teachers' value to society and help to strengthen the teaching profession, according to a paper released by the Business Council of Australia earlier this year.

The BCA has called for an additional \$4 billion funding to pay teachers.

Teachers' contribution to society is being "greatly undervalued", the chairman of the BCA's Education, Skills and Innovation Task Force, Hutch Ranck, said in a statement.

"Teachers are a key to unlocking our nation's economic and social potential," he said.

"The quality of learning by our children is critical in ensuring Australia has the skills and knowledge required to meet its future challenges, and quality and effectiveness of classroom teachers are the most important influences on effective learning.

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contribution they make to the future prosperity of our nation.

"While salary may not be the strongest reason teachers choose to enter the profession our research shows it is a key reason many talented people decide to avoid teaching.

"This is a concern if we want our education system to be among the world's best," Ranck said.

Remuneration is important, he said, because it reflects the value a community places on a particular occupation.

Under the BCA's plan, chief executive Katie Lahey told ABC Radio program 'AM' that teachers, "when they're ready to step up the career path... would take a certificate that would make them an accomplished teacher or accredit them as a leading teacher.

"And this is something quite new that teachers would have a career path, which to most of us makes absolute commonsense. But at the moment, teachers very early in their careers, hit the \$70,000 barrier and if they want to go further, they've got to exit teaching," Lahey said.

rewards demonstrated quality teaching, knowledge, skills and practice. The career structure would include a set of professional teaching standards against which teachers could be voluntarily assessed to be classified as an 'accomplished teacher'.

"Standards, which have been developed by a number of jurisdictions around the country, have been validated by the independent research," says AEU federal president Angelo Gavrielatos.

The AEU policy has two objectives says Gavrielatos. The first is a competitive professional salary for all teachers to ensure that the profession can attract and retain teachers in the numbers required

to guarantee a qualified teacher in front of every classroom. The second is further recognition and appropriate reward for demonstrated quality teaching, knowledge, skills and practice.

Countering "harebrained" policy

It's a long way from the Howard government's talk of performance pay, a proposal that was nothing short of "harebrained", says

Gavrielatos. "It was silly, counterproductive and dangerous education policy and discredited roundly by all serious education commentators.

"The former Minister Julie Bishop, for example, put forward a proposition that could be described as 'a cash for grades proposal' and a 'popularity contest for teachers'," he says.

Bishop's proposals sank not only because they were educationally ▶

unsound but also because the then treasurer, Peter Costello, refused to allocate funding, says Gavrielatos.

“Our proposal of professional pay is underpinned by a scheme that would potentially see teachers volunteer to be assessed against professional teaching standards, standards developed by the profession.”

The ball is now in the federal government’s court. The AEU proposal depends on additional government funding to succeed.

“Julia Gillard has mentioned on more than one occasion that she wants to appropriately recog-



nise quality teaching. Well we’re saying that alongside that recognition there must be a tangible reward and that tangible reward needs to be appropriate remuneration recognising high quality teaching skills, knowledge and practice,” says Gavrielatos.

Earlier this year a Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) statement discussed the need to recognise quality teaching. Subsequently, the federal government allocated funding to commission research into ways of assessing quality teaching.

“That research has been done,” says Gavrielatos. “It’s now time for the government, if they’re serious about this, to put their ‘money where their mouth is.’” ●

Tracey Evans is a commissioning editor for Australian Educator.

The survey

The AEU commissioned the University of New South Wales’ research organisation, Educational Assessment Australia, to research the validity and application of a national set of standards and indicators to the professional experience and qualifications of a sample of teachers in public schools in each state and territory.

More than 1800 teachers from 577 schools participated in the survey...

More than 1800 teachers from 577 schools participated in the survey, answering 104 questions about standards of teaching and practice as well as community participation.

While there are differences among the states and territories, they are largely in name only, says EAA Director, Dr Peter Knapp.

“The commonalities were very strong and the survey questions ensured that there was consistency in the names of the various indicators, so that they wouldn’t discriminate against teachers from all of the states or territories,” he says.

“We were also careful not to discriminate against location—against any particular state or territory or groups of states and secondly not to discriminate against teachers based on their location. If you look at the

distribution of scores across each state and territory, there were clear consistencies.”

Dr Knapp says the main goal was to measure the validity of the standards and the degree to which teachers met or approximated those standards. “So, for instance, for any of the indicators of accomplished teaching practice, our analysis examined whether the most experienced teachers in terms of qualifications, professional development and classroom practice were represented to a higher degree than those teachers with less exposure to working with students in the classroom,” he says.

Findings

This analysis clearly indicates that the current range of evidence and criteria developed in the states and territories provides a valid foundation for a national model for recognition of ‘teacher accomplishment’.

This survey would form a valid basis for the development of a national assessment instrument to assist states and territories to plan for valid and consistent measures for recognising ‘accomplishment’ in teacher standards and performance.

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