



AEU Parliamentary Brief

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Introducing Pat Byrne, AEU Federal President

Pat Byrne was recently elected as the Federal President of the AEU. Pat is a primary school teacher from Western Australia. She is recognised for her commitment to high quality public education. Pat comes to the Federal role with previous experience as President of the State School Teachers Union of WA. As leader of one of Australia's largest unions, Pat speaks not only for her members but for the millions of families, parents and students who rely on Australia's public education systems.



*AEU Federal President
Pat Byrne*

National Day of Action Highlights Staffing Crisis

Recent industrial action taken by AEU members in three states as part of a National Day of Action highlighted the growing staffing crisis in Australian schools. Nearly 100,000 educators took action making it one of the largest stopwork actions in Australian history. Support actions were also mounted in all states and territories. Community and media support for the action was positive.

The AEU believes that state and federal governments must work together to ensure there will

be enough qualified teachers in the coming decade to meet demand. This requires improvements to the career paths offered to prospective teachers, as well as strategies to encourage qualified teachers to return to the profession. The AEU has developed a plan to address the shortage which can be found at: <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Campaigns/teachersupply.pdf>

Teacher shortage reaching crisis point

There are already shortages in regional and rural schools and in specific subject areas such as maths, science, languages, and technology. By 2005 the shortage will have worsened and it is estimated there will be a national shortfall of 5,000 teachers. This could rise to 25,000 by the end of the decade if nothing is done now.

In a 2003 survey of 437 principals, 54% said they had experienced teacher supply problems over the previous year and 57% said the teacher supply problem became worse over the previous year.

Teacher shortages in specialist areas

A recent survey of 72 secondary school principals found that 69.4% of their school's programs were being taught by teachers who were not fully qualified in the curriculum and teaching areas concerned.

28% of Year 8 teachers of Mathematics were not qualified either in mathematics or mathematics education

Year 8 Science classes were mostly taught by teachers with a major in biology; majors in physics were less common.

Fewer than half of Year 12 information technology teachers held third year university or higher qualifications in that field.

For teachers of technical subjects the figure was approximately 40%.

Teacher shortage problems are worse in regional and rural areas where it is even more difficult to attract teachers to live.

Alarming retirement statistics governments continue to ignore

118,000 teachers are eligible to retire by the year 2012.

Over 68,000 (27%) of the teaching workforce is eligible to retire by 2007.

With about 7,500 to 8,500 graduates going into teaching each year to 2007, or a total of 45,000 to 50,000 (2002 - 2007), this leaves a shortfall of 20,000 to 30,000 teachers. (The difference between supply and demand.)

35% of teachers are in the age bracket 40 - 49 in 2001 so another 50,000 teachers will be eligible for retirement between 2007 and 2012.

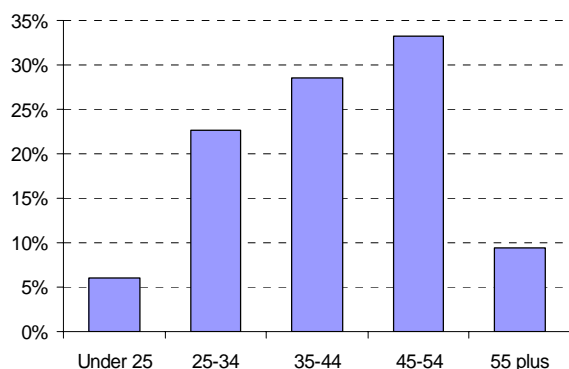
The highest proportion of teachers are in their middle to late 40s.

The average age of teachers (in 2002) was 43.1.

The most frequently encountered age among Australian teachers is 49.

24.5% of public primary and 28% of public secondary teachers are over 50.

Teachers by age in 2001
(ABS Census 2001)



New teachers are not staying in the profession

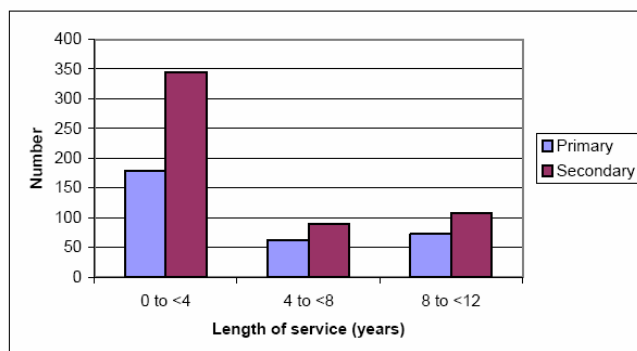
Governments need not only to address issues of attracting teachers but also of retaining them, as new teachers continue to leave in large numbers early in their careers. Many spend 4 years studying only to leave within the first 4 years of beginning teaching.

Figures for 1995, 1996, and 1997, supplied by Education Queensland, suggest that an average of 20% of Queensland graduates appointed to government schools leave within the first five years of teaching.

A Victorian 2003 survey of over 1,000 beginning teachers (those in their first five years) found that almost 50% did not think they would be in the profession longer than 10 years.

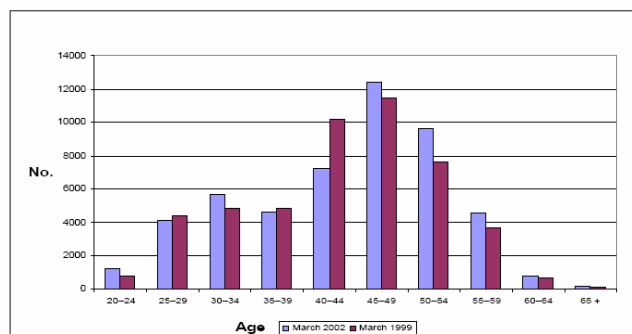
The following NSW research shows the hole in the bucket syndrome governments need to address urgently. There is little point in investing hundreds of thousands of dollars on advertising campaigns to attract teachers into the profession, if they leave within a few years of teaching because of pay and workload.

Figure 8: Resignations in NSW government schools - 2001



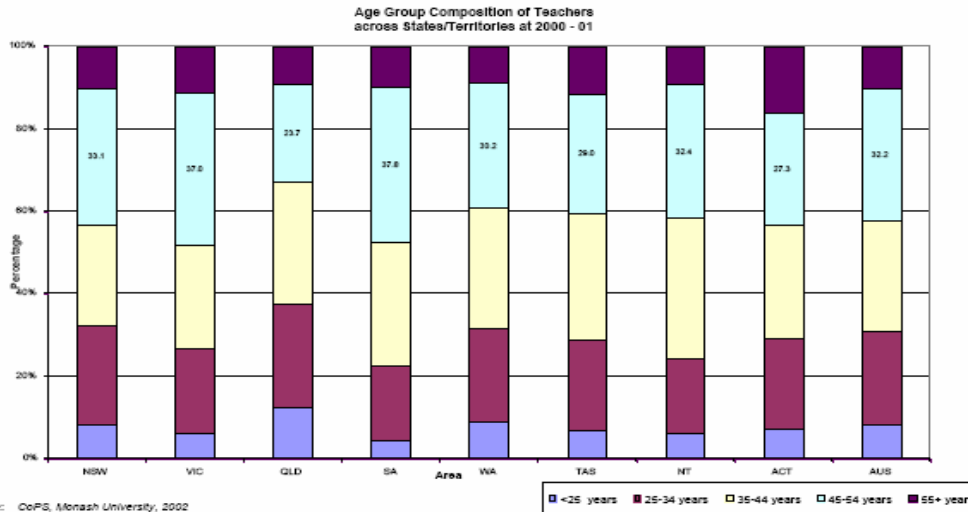
Source: Workforce Planning Unit, NSW DET

Figure 6: Age profile of teachers in NSW government schools - March 2002



Source: Workforce Planning Unit, NSW DET

Chart 13



Source: CoPS, Monash University, 2002

Statistics and information obtained from:

- Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs Paper (MCEETYA)
- Teacher Supply & Demand – Preston
- Preston, Barbara, 2000, Teacher Supply and Demand to 2005: projections and context, Australian Council of Deans of Education, O'Connor, ACT
- Third International Maths & Science Study (TIMSS)
- AEU 2003 State of our Schools Survey (Victoria)

Independent Inquiry into the Provision of Universal Access to High Quality Preschool Education

The AEU is sponsoring an independent inquiry into the provision of universal access to high quality preschool education across Australia.

Underpinned by a commitment to equity and universal access, the inquiry will focus on the role of the states/territories and the Commonwealth in ensuring that all children in Australia have access to a high quality, free preschool education. It will identify the current facts and challenges and focus on initiatives that can move the national agenda towards the achievement of that objective.



Preschool Education Inquiry

Inquiry process

The AEU has commissioned an independent researcher, Ms Kathy Walker, to undertake this important research. The researcher will participate in a national early childhood education forum, to be held on 21 October 2003, in order to hear the views of national stakeholders in early childhood education. Organisations and individuals will be invited also to make submissions to the inquiry in writing.

A series of forums will be held in capital cities around Australia, to provide further opportunities for stakeholders to make input to the process and to highlight issues in their state or territory which are relevant to the national picture. Meetings with key stakeholders are also planned.

The researcher will report back to national stakeholders on the findings, including proposals for initiatives and/or further action, at a further national forum, likely to be held in April 2004.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference and other information including suggested

areas of focus are at:

<http://www.aefederal.org.au/Ec/Inquiry.html>

National forum

The first national forum will be held for invited participants on 21 October 2003 at 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria 3006. State and Territory forums will be held during 2004. Written submissions will also be sought.

Researcher

Kathy Walker is a lecturer at RMIT University in the Faculty of Education and a consultant in education.

She has had extensive experience in education for over 20 years. She works as a consultant with teachers, parents and other professionals across early childhood, primary, secondary and adult sectors.

Her publications include *Teaming Up*, a book for teachers on multi-age classrooms and curriculum and socialisation. Other publications include *putting children first* and journal articles about philosophy and curriculum, children's development and social skills and play therapy.

In 1995 Kathy won the University Teaching Award at Swinburne University and in 2001 Kathy won the RMIT University Teaching Award for Student Centred Learning.

Reference Group

A reference group will be established to provide support to the researcher and the project. It will include:

- Dr Helen May, Professor of Early Childhood Education, Victoria University of Wellington;
- Professor Margaret Reynolds, President, UN Association of Australia;
- Ms Rosslyn Noonan, Chief Commissioner, Human Rights Commission, New Zealand;
- Ms Susan Hill, Associate Professor, delissa Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies, University of South Australia.

Australian Education Union Website

Keep up with developments in the national public education campaign through the AEU's national website. Links are provided to state and territory websites at this address:

<http://www.aufederal.org.au>

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