



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

**Pat Byrne**  
*Federal President*

**Susan Hopgood**  
*Federal Secretary*

**Australian Education Union**  
120 Clarendon Street  
Southbank Vic 3006

Telephone: 03 9693 1800  
Fax: 03 9693 1805  
E-mail: [aeu@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:aeu@aeufederal.org.au)

Authorised, printed and published on the internet by Pat Byrne, Federal President,  
Australian Education Union, Ground Floor, 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, VIC 3006

## 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 are essential to educational success and all teachers 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 to the salaries of accomplished teachers and to improve the conditions of 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 of 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 as 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.

The AEU proposes a professional standards-linked career reform to recognise and enhance the high quality of teaching which students need to meet the challenges of the future. But this requires the co-operation of all the stakeholders, including the school systems and governments. The state governments have estimated that an additional \$2.9 billion is required to ensure that every child has access to a high quality public education.

The Federal Government has redirected funds from public schools to private schools which are often operating with much higher levels of resources. The Federal and state/territory governments must co-operate to make public education a national priority.

Additional funds allocated fairly are required to resource our public schools well and to ensure that teachers meet professional standards of quality teaching. In a national survey of beginning teachers, the AEU found that nearly half did not believe they would be teaching in public systems in 10 years time. Their principal concerns were excessive workload and class sizes, inadequate pay and restricted career options. Professional teaching standards must be underpinned by professional teaching and learning conditions to ensure the success of our students.

### The AEU Proposal for Professional Pay

The Australian Education Union proposes 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 independent 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 Ministerial Council of State and Federal Education Ministers (MCEETYA) has already proposed a National Framework for Standards including four career dimensions (Graduation, Competence,

Accomplishment and Leadership) and describes the work of teachers through four categories (Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, Professional Values and Professional Relationships.)

The AEU proposes the following framework as the basis for our proposal for Professional Pay

### **A framework for Professional Pay standards**

- **INITIAL EDUCATION:** attract the best entrants by improving teacher education courses, beginning salary rates and HECS remission.
- **BAND 1 GRADUATION:** provide improved support, non-teaching time, professional development and mentoring for new teachers prior to full registration.
- **BAND 2 COMPETENCE:** progressively recognise the attainment of skills and knowledge of teachers gained through successful professional practice. Teachers on this band who wish to apply for appraisal to move to Band 3 may do so.
- **BAND 3 ACCOMPLISHED:** a new classification for expert teachers to access professional pay based on a mix of successful practice, professional development and student learning. Access to this third band will recognise teacher quality through a formal appraisal process which is independent and transparent.
- **LEADERSHIP:** A set of standards which reflect the qualities associated with educational leadership

**Such a comprehensive reform must be underpinned by increased funding to public schools to address resource issues like workload, qualified allied staff and infrastructure. Adequate resources for professional teaching and learning conditions are crucial for quality teaching.**

### **How would the scheme work?**

The standards to be attained should be established by independent research 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 portfolio prior to being accredited 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.

Based on the standards developed for MCEETYA, a number of state registration bodies have already established standards for teachers:

- The Queensland College of Teachers involved stakeholders in the development of a set of ten standards which to which all teachers should aspire for registration purposes.
- The Victorian Institute of Teachers has also developed standards for a range of categories of teacher.
- The NSW Institute of Teachers has proposed a set of standards for accomplished teachers grouped under Teaching Practice, Curriculum/programming, Student Achievement, Professional Development and Parents and community.

The AEU supports independent research on the development of standards and their applicability to teachers in all states and territories. The involvement of teachers in the process of development, trialing and verification of standards is essential to winning acceptance of their validity.

To this end, in consultation with stakeholders, the AEU will conduct a research survey on a national basis to ascertain the validity and level of standards of accomplished teaching practice.

## **Standards-linked pay schemes already in existence**

A report by the Australian Council for Educational Research noted three successful Australian schemes which provide pay increases beyond the top of the incremental scale for accomplished teaching performance, based on a standards-based assessment process. These schemes are:

- Level 3 Classroom Teacher in Western Australia
- Teacher of Exemplary Practice in the Northern Territory
- Advanced Skills Teacher in South Australia

These schemes were negotiated by the AEU and are widely accepted by teachers. The ACER noted that these augured well for standards-linked reform. These schemes' inadequacies include the limited number of positions and small salary increases available. However, they illustrate the willingness and capacity of the AEU to negotiate reforms which recognise professional excellence.

## **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 facilities with toilet blocks and new classrooms.

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.

A Ministerial taskforce has calculated the public education systems need an additional \$2.9 billion every year so that every school has enough resources to ensure every child in Australia has the opportunity to fully develop his or her talents and capacities

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 Federal Government has decided that a "performance pay" system to pay teachers a bonus based on student test scores and assessments by parents is a condition of future education funding. But such cash-for-grades schemes have failed virtually everywhere they have been attempted.

The Federal Minister 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.*

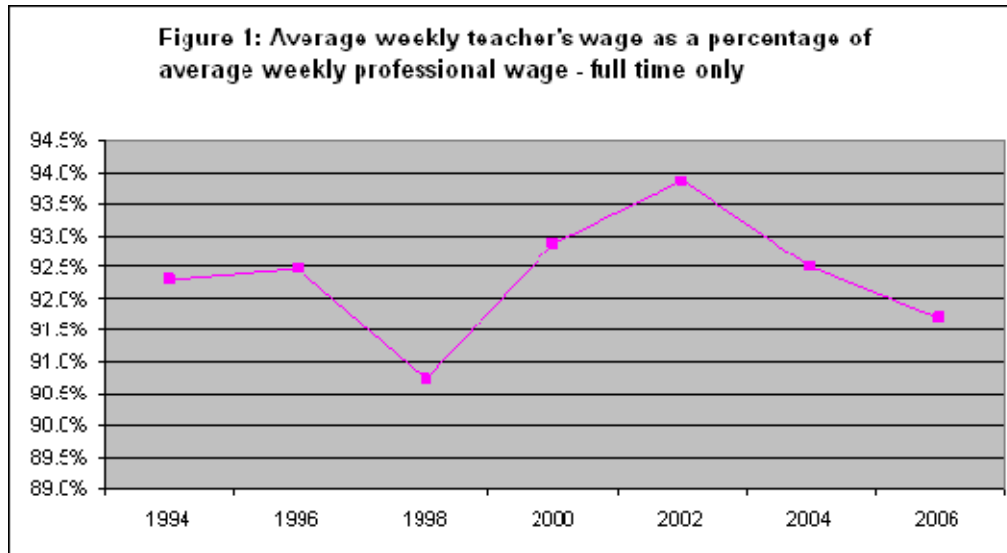
The AEU also rejects any scheme which would pay bonuses to some teachers at the expense of others as Federal Education Minister Julie Bishop has suggested, and rejects the use of the discredited 'WorkChoices' AWA provisions to implement the change.

**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 170,000 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.**

## The state of Australia's teaching workforce

The Australian teaching workforce is generally underpaid compared with other professions. The average weekly teacher's wage in 2006 was almost 10% less than the average weekly professional wage.

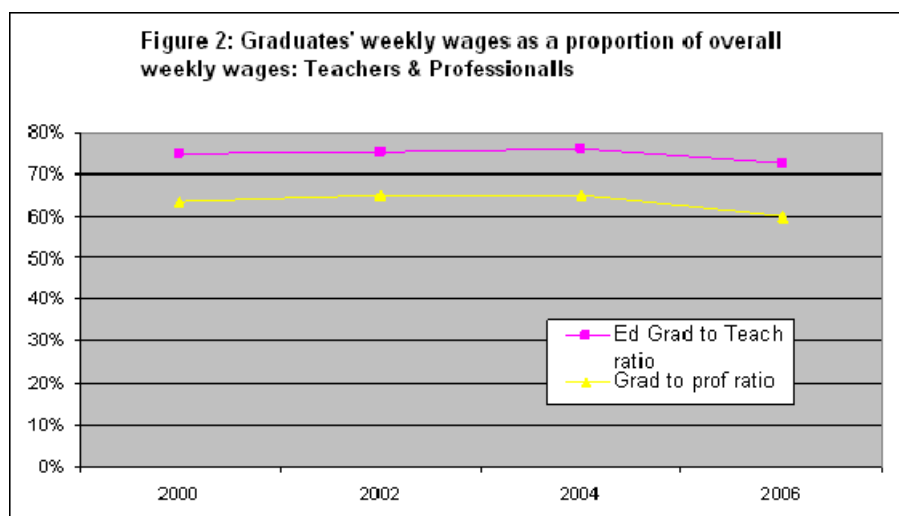


Source: ABS Employee Hours and Earnings (cat no 6306.0, various years).

Research by the Ministerial Council for Education Employment and Training suggests that 6 – 8% of teachers leave the public sector each year. While loss to other industries is significant, the majority of teachers leave for retirement.

According to MCEETYA research, the teacher workforce is generally older than the rest of the professional workforce, with the highest proportion of teachers aged in their middle to late forties. 24.5% of public primary school teachers and 28% of secondary teachers are over 50.

While graduate salaries are generally competitive, there are few options for these mid-career teachers:



Source: ABS Employee Hours and Earnings (cat no 6306.0, various years) and Gradstats Table GS4 (various years).