Australian Education Union

Submission to the

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession

December 2018

Correna Haythorpe
Federal President

Susan Hopgood
Federal Secretary

Australian Education Union
PO Box 1158
South Melbourne Vic 3205

Telephone: +61 (0)3 9693 1800
Facsimile: +61 (0)3 9693 1805
Web: www.aeufederal.org.au
E-mail: aeu@aeufederal.org.au

Introduction

The Australian Education Union (AEU) represents more than 187,000 members employed in public primary, secondary and special schools and the early childhood, TAFE and adult provision sectors as teachers, educational leaders, education assistants or support staff across Australia. The AEU has a primary strategic objective to "protect and promote quality teaching and learning" which, among others, includes the following aims:

- To enhance and support the professional and industrial status of AEU members in public education.
- To achieve minimum academic standards and entry scores for teaching degrees.
- To achieve minimum entry to teaching of a two year post graduate teaching qualification.
- To ensure that every child has access to a high quality, inclusive and culturally relevant curriculum.
- To ensure access to ongoing, secure employment for teachers and education support staff.
- To ensure access to professional development.

The explicit purpose of each of these aims is to protect and improve the status of the teaching profession, and to ensure that teachers are supported at each stage of their careers. As such, the AEU welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training inquiry into the status of the teaching profession. The AEU has made numerous submissions to numerous bodies in recent years that are relevant to the current inquiry, including the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) initial consultation concerning the development of national selection guidelines for admission into Initial Teacher Education (2013), the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (2017), the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (2017) and the National Review of Teacher Registration (2018). This submission draws on, and updates some material of particular relevance to the status of the teaching profession from those previous submissions.

The OECD report *Effective Teacher Policies: Insights from PISA* states unequivocally that the "quality of an education system depends on the quality of its teachers; but the quality of teachers cannot exceed the quality of the policies that shape their work environment in school and that guide their selection, recruitment and development."[1] The AEU is committed to the pursuit of higher standards in all facets of public education, and has consistently advocated for the application of uniformly high standards for the qualifications, induction and ongoing professional learning for teachers. The maintenance, and where necessary, the introduction of high standards in teacher selection, recruitment and development is essential to protect and enhance the status of the teaching profession.

In 1998 the previous Commonwealth inquiry into the status of the teaching profession, *A Class Act*, made a raft of recommendations on teacher standards, the impact of casual employment, funding for resources and technology in schools and in disadvantaged schools, a national recruitment campaign to attract high quality applicants to the profession, the removal

---

[1] OECD (2018), *Effective Teacher Policies: Insights from PISA*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264301603-en .p.20

of disincentives for STEM graduates to become teachers and greater stringency in national induction programs.[2] The fact that the vast majority of these recommendations from two decades ago would be equally as valid and welcome as outcomes from this current inquiry is indicative of the lack of substantive action by successive governments to make any material improvement to the professional standing of teachers.

This submission will address each of the four inquiry areas in turn and address the factors that drive the current constraints the Committee has selected as its focus. It will also offer a number of recommendations for actions required to address those constraints and improve the status of the teaching profession.

1. Increasing the attractiveness of the profession for teachers and principals, including workplace conditions, and career and leadership structures

Australia has some way to go in presenting teaching as an attractive profession. The most recently available Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data, from 2015, shows that Australia is 27th of 34 OECD countries in the gap between the percentages of high achieving 15 year olds who expect to be working as a teacher at age 30 and those who expect to pursue a different career, with a 28 percentage point gap between the two.[3] The requirements for entry to teaching training are broader in Australia than in most similar countries. Among the 19 countries and economies listed as high performing by the OECD, Australia has the highest share of students entering teacher training with low marks in core subjects, at 11.1% of trainee teachers. Australia also has the fourth lowest share of top performers in at least one subject entering Initial Teacher Education (ITE).[4]

If the Committee seeks to ameliorate the decline in high achieving students who want to enter ITE and pursue teaching careers, then it is essential that the primary drivers of this decline in the attractiveness of teaching as a profession are properly analysed and comprehensively addressed.

1.1   Improving teachers' pay

To attract high quality candidates into teaching it is necessary to invest in appropriate salary and reward structures. Numerous international studies from the 1970s to the current decade have consistently shown that higher teacher salaries relative to those of other comparable professionals increase the likelihood of highly performing secondary students becoming teachers, and reduce long term rates of attrition. Chevalier, Dolton & McIntosh (2006) found that the number of high quality secondary school graduates who enter teaching careers rises and falls in direct correlation with teachers' salaries.[5] As pointed out by Ingvarson et al. in their submission to the Teachers Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) in 2014, there is also a clear correlation between a country's investment in teachers' salaries and the performance of its students in PISA tests. Furthermore, whilst early career teachers are

---

[2] Commonwealth of Australia (1998), *A Class Act: An Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*, Canberra, pp. x– xv.
[3] OECD, *Op.cit.* p.28.
[4] OECD, *Op.cit.* p.47.
[5] Chevalier, A., Dolton, P. & McIntosh, S. (2007). Recruiting and retaining teachers in the UK. An analysis of graduate occupational choice from the 1960s to the 1990s. Economica, 74(293), pp. 71

remunerated at similar levels to those in other graduate positions, there is a noticeable lag in teachers' pay progression over time which leads to shortages, attrition and difficulties in recruitment, particularly for teachers in Science, Technology, and Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Although pay is not the sole determining factor in the attractiveness or otherwise of any profession, it nonetheless is a significant consideration, and is an area where in Australia teaching has failed to keep pace with other professional occupations requiring similar levels of qualification and skill. One example of this is the artificial wage "cap" imposed on teachers' salaries by numerous state governments which has had a substantial and ongoing impact on the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession. There are also significant structural limitations to teachers' pay that limit the attractiveness of the profession to high performing secondary students and university graduates from in demand disciplines.

The career and salary progression structure for teachers in most states and territories creates a disincentive for experienced teachers to remain in the profession. The relatively narrow interval between graduate salaries and those of the most experienced teachers has the effect of forcing a decline in salary, relative to other professions, as experience and expertise increases.[6] This is in stark contrast to evidence from a study of teachers' salaries in 30 countries that shows that the salaries of experienced teachers relative to other comparable professions distinguishes countries with high levels of student achievement from others. In Australia, by contrast, teachers' salaries have stagnated, particularly at the "flat" top end of the scale in existing salary structures, which research has shown discourages potentially good teachers from entering the profession. [7]

In 2012 the Productivity Commission report on the schools workforce recognised this as a major issue for the attractiveness of teaching as a profession, noting that in most states and territories teachers will reach the top of the pay scale in around a decade, and (citing the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the OECD) concluded that "average weekly ordinary time earnings in the broader education sector are now only about 7 per cent above the average for all surveyed industries, compared with 14 per cent in 1994. Moreover, there is evidence that salaries at the top of teacher pay scales did not increase in real terms between 1995 and 2009."[8] At that time the ratio between the top of the salary scale and teachers' starting salaries in Australia was approximately 1.4, significantly lower than the OECD average of just over a 1.6.[9] More recently the gap has further widened and *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2018* shows that whilst the OECD average ratio at the top of the scale has increased to 1.8 times starting salary, in Australia nothing has changed, with the average salary for Australian teachers stuck at 1.4 times starting salary. This ranks Australia as 26th of the 34 OECD countries in terms of the ratio.

The flat and capped salary scales for teachers in most jurisdictions in Australia creates a disincentive for the most experienced teachers to remain in the profession. Teachers in Australia usually reach the top of the scale (1.4 times graduate wage) in around ten years and

---

[6] Ingvarson, L., Reid, K., Buckley, S., Kleinhenz, E., Masters, G., Rowley, G. (2014). Best Practice Teacher Education Programs and Australia's Own Programs. Canberra: Department of Education, p.47.

[7] Akiba, M., Ciu, Y., Shimizu, K., & Lang, G. (2012). Teacher salary and student achievement: A crossnational analysis of 30 countries. International Journal of Educational Research, 53, 171-181.cited in Ingvarson et. al, *Op.cit.* p.47

[8] Productivity Commission (2012), Schools Workforce, Research Report, Canberra. p5

[9] *Ibid.,* p111

this is reflected in the OECD figures, which show that the graduate ratios for 15 years' experience and the top of the scale in Australia are identical. This contrasts with the OECD average, where the ratio for teachers with 15 year experience is 1.4 graduate salary but the average ratio for teachers at the top of the scale is 1.8 graduate salary. The increase in the average salary ratio for those with greater than 15 years' experience shows that in most OECD countries experienced teachers continue to be rewarded through pay progression well into their careers, unlike in Australia, where a teacher can spent most (and potentially up to three quarters) of their career without access to pay progression.

1.2   The need for greater professional autonomy

Table 1:   Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Domains of teaching	Standards
Professional Knowledge	1. Know students and how they learn
	2. Know the content and how to teach it
Professional Practice	3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning
	4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments
	5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning
Professional Engagement	6. Engage in professional learning
	7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community

Table 1 shows the seven professional standards for teachers in Australia. AITSL states that these standards exist to "contribute to the professionalisation of teaching and raise the status of the profession" by "providing a framework which makes clear the knowledge, practice and professional engagement required across teachers' careers."[10] It is clear from each of the seven standards and the four career stages (graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teacher) that a significant level of professional autonomy over curriculum and practice is required to meet the standards and to progress through the career stages. However, we have recently seen a drive by federal, state and territory governments towards devolution of responsibility for the administration, governance, management and financing of schools to educators rather than to administrators whilst at the same time that teacher's autonomy over curriculum and assessment has been increasingly restricted.[11]

The NSW Teachers Federation has compiled a thorough compendium of the available research into devolution in schools. It shows that what is often painted as increasing autonomy for teachers and principals is actually representative of a decline in the level of professional autonomy afforded to educators and the silencing of the teacher's voice in decisions made at the school, state and national levels. It also shows how devolution often results in responsibility for the administration, planning and the management of schools being

---

[10] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2011), *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers,* p.2

[11] NSW Teachers Federation Principals Conference (2013), *Research: Devolution in Education,* p. 32

passed onto teachers and principals at the same time as control over curriculum and assessment is centralised to an ever greater extent. This limits teachers' professional autonomy and has had severe consequences for the attractiveness of the principal role, with many state branches of the AEU reporting that the managerialisation of the principal role at the expense of a focus on educational leadership has resulted in increased difficulty in recruiting new principals.

A key finding of a recent study of the work composition of over 18,000 teachers in NSW found that "teachers require more professional respect, time and support for their teaching and the facilitation of student learning" and reported "an expansion of the range of duties performed, particularly in relation to administrative tasks. Over 97% of teachers reported an increase in administrative requirements, while over 96% report an increase in the collection, analysis and reporting of data."[12] Similarly, the AEU's 2018 *State of Our Schools* survey found that 81% of teachers considered that they spent too much time on administrative tasks, 58% said they spent too much time on preparing students for standardised tests and 57% said they spent too much time administering these tests.

Recommendation 1: That enhancing the status of the teaching profession and achieving excellence in all Australian schools requires a strong public education system, including a focus on the relationship between system quality, access and equity and including how resources are distributed to effectively address varying level of need across schools and systems. This includes the provision of appropriate human resources, time-allocations, materials, support structure and personnel, professional development and physical infrastructure.

Recommendation 2: In order to enhance the status of the teaching profession it is necessary to enable teachers a greater level of control over assessment and curriculum, and to reverse the drive towards explicit instruction and one size fits all national assessment. Support for professional autonomy in teaching, curriculum development and assessment and reporting must be increased and then maintained.

Recommendation 3: That federal organisations which set policy and procedures that impact directly on education must have decision making processes that involve education unions as the representative and accountable voice of the teaching profession.

---

[12] McGrath- Champ, S., Wilson, R., Stacey, M. & Fitzgerald, S., (2018) *Understanding Teaching in Schools ,the Foundation for Teaching and Learning: 2018 Report to the NSW Teachers Federation,* Sydney, pp. 1-2

Figure 1: **What is your view about how much time you are being asked to spend in the following areas?**
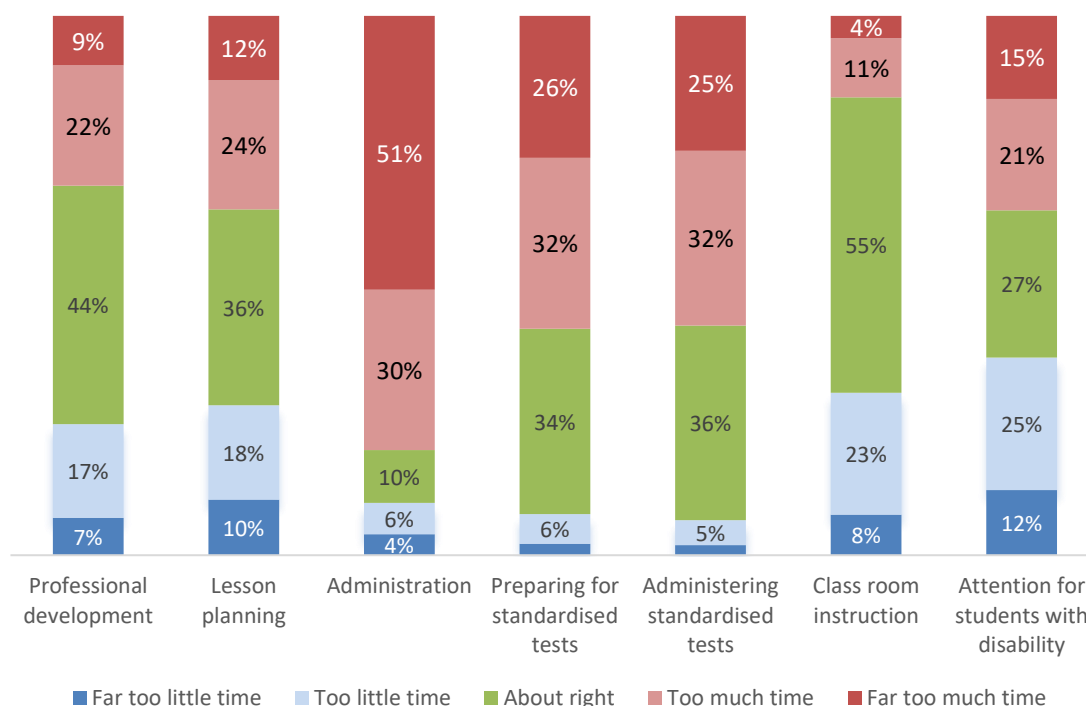
Standardised assessment, in its current form, is no longer fit for its original purpose. The continued use of NAPLAN and the ever increasing emphasis on it as a ranking tool impacts hugely on teachers' autonomy in the classroom, sense of professionalism as an educator. The AEU's 2018 *State of Our Schools*[13] survey found that:

- 76% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to an increase in the pressure on teachers to improve NAPLAN results
- 75% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to an increase in the use of NAPLAN data to measure school performance
- 65% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to a noticeable increase in the stress levels of students in the lead up to the test
- 61% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to a greater focus on preparing for the test, including pre-testing

It is clear that the erosion of teachers' professional autonomy through an increase in administrative workload and published standardised assessment impacts teacher's sense of professionalism and stifles professional development and progress. The current prescriptive approach to curriculum and assessment can only serve to de-motive and ultimately de-skill teachers, to stifle the morale of the workforce and degrade the status of the profession.

Reducing the amount of devolved system management and administration work required of principals would mean providing more time to focus on educational leadership. This could be facilitated by the Commonwealth Department for Education and Training or state government departments taking back responsibility for some of those devolved tasks and removing or streamlining some compliance requirements.

---

[13] Australian Education Union (2018) *State of our Schools* survey data, available on request

Recommendation 4: That a comprehensive review of NAPLAN is undertaken, focusing on whether the current approach to standardised testing is fit for purpose. Standardised testing should provide a snapshot of student learning at a single point in time from a random sample over a large population to provide the system-wide information required to support planning and resource allocation and enable governments and education systems to fulfil their responsibility to provide funding for programs in areas identified as in need.

Recommendation 5: That the use of standardised testing, such as NAPLAN, as a scorecard for individual schools or groups of students in those schools, as currently promoted through the My School website, is ceased.

Recommendation 6: That greater centralised systemic support and improved access to continuous professional development for school leaders and particularly new principals is crucial to build and maintain effective educational leadership and must be supported and resourced by education systems.

1.3 Addressing recruitment shortfall and teacher shortages in Australia

A primary driver of the status of any profession is its attractiveness to high performing secondary graduates. The attractiveness of teaching to high performing secondary school graduates has been in decline for at least three decades, and teacher shortages across a range of subject areas have now reached crisis point. The AEU's annual *State of Our Schools* survey, the most comprehensive survey of teachers and principals in Australia, paints a bleak picture of current teacher shortages in Australia's public schools. In the 2018 survey, 697 principals were surveyed, and of those, 424 (61%) stated that their school has experienced teacher shortages in the last year.

Nearly two thirds (64.6%) of principals said that over the past year it has become harder to fill vacancies across all areas of the curriculum, and indeed, the *State of Our Schools* survey results show that principals struggle to retain staff and to fill vacancies across the entire curriculum.[14] In particular, principals struggle to recruit teachers qualified to teach STEM subjects, English and Languages other than English. This poses a significant problem in terms of ensuring that schools are able to offer the full range of subjects and that students are able to access a broad and rich curriculum.

In addition to retaining teachers in the profession, Australia has difficulty attracting young people to consider teaching as a profession. Data from the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that only 5.7% of 15-year-old students in Australia expected to be working as teachers when they are aged 30, and the proportion of these who do actually become teachers and continue working in the profession for approximately 10 years, is of course, significantly lower.[15] Furthermore, the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) showed that the proportion of Australian teachers aged below thirty decreased sharply from 18.2% in 2008 to 15.7% in 2013, which demonstrates that young teaching graduates are not being retained in the profession and creating an aging workforce and significant succession problems.[16]

---

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] OECD, *Op.cit.,* online tables, accessed from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933740972

[16] Freeman, Chris; O'Malley, Kate; and Eveleigh, Frances, (2014) *Australian teachers and the learning environment: An analysis of teacher response to TALIS 2013: Final Report* p.iii

As figure 2 (below) clearly shows, there has been a continued and consistent increase in the percentage of principals reporting teacher shortages in each of the last four years, to the point where schools affected by shortages have more than doubled from 28% in 2015 to 61% in 2018.[17]

Figure 2:   Has your school experienced teacher shortages in the last year?
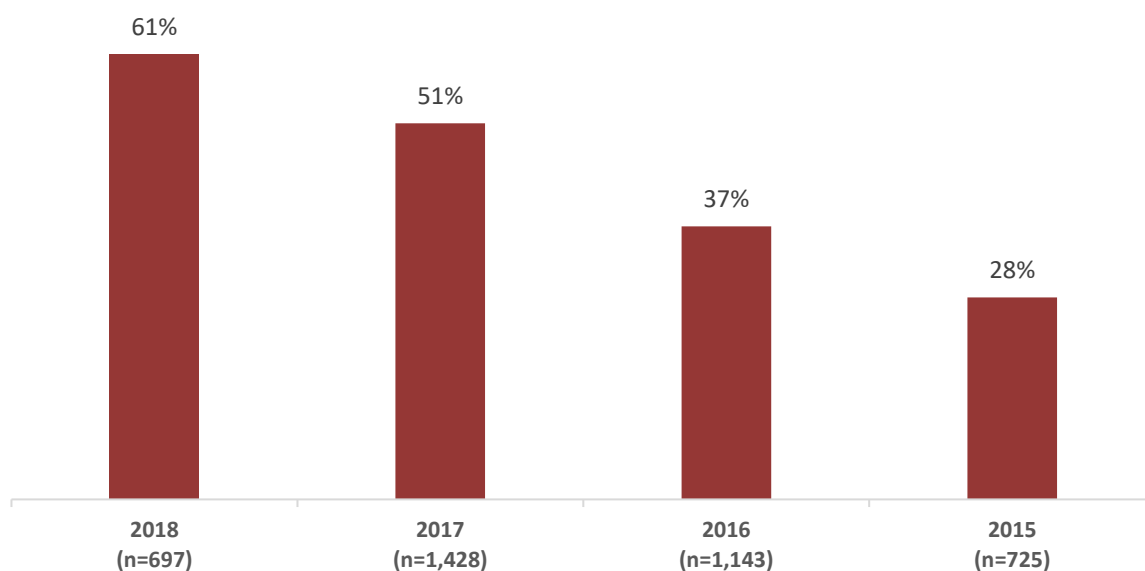
Shortages were particularly acute at remote schools, where more than four fifths (82%) of principals reported shortages in 2018.

[17] Australian Education Union (2018), *Op. Cit.*

Figure 3:   **In the past year has it become harder or easier to suitably fill staff vacancies across all areas of the curriculum your school experienced teacher shortages?**
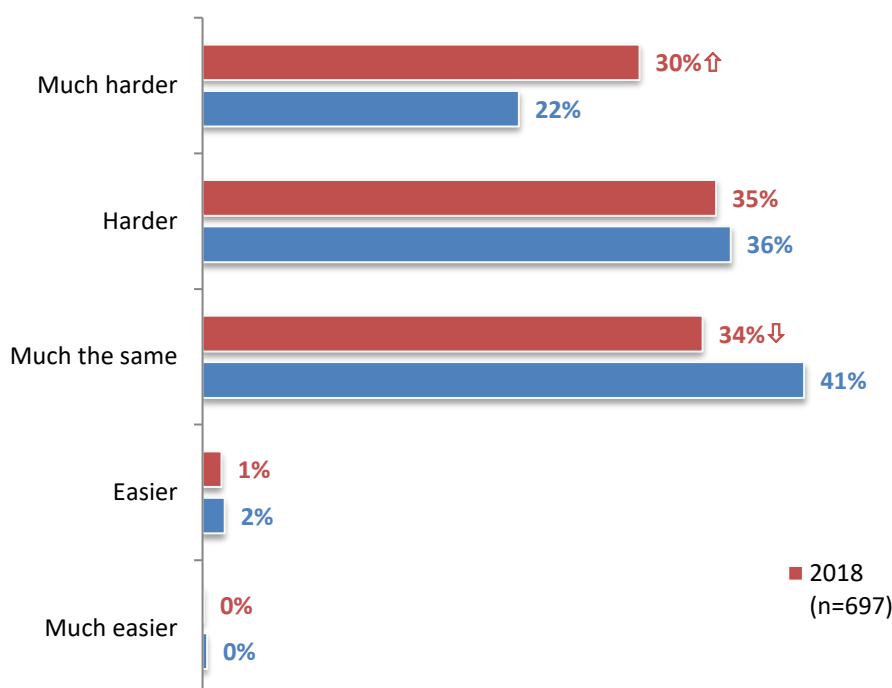
It is also increasingly difficult for schools to address teacher shortages. 65% of principals responded that it has become either much harder (30%) or harder (35%) to fill vacancies than it was one year ago. The "much harder" figure in particular is a significant increase on the 22% of principals who responded that way in 2017.

The curriculum areas where principals had the most difficulty in filling vacancies were Maths (49%), Technology (42%) and Science (31%) and 45% of Principals said that Maths and Science classes are taught by teachers who teaching "out of field" and who are not fully qualified in the subject area.[18]

1.4   Addressing the problem of out of field teaching

The scale of the difficulty in recruiting Maths, Technology and Science teachers was laid bare in a recent report by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI). AMSI found that there is a 76% chance of early secondary school (years 7-10) students being taught by at least one out of field maths teacher through years 7-10, a 35% chance of at least two years of a maths teacher teaching outside their field and an 8% chance of at least three years of out of field teaching during the first four years of secondary school, and that less than one quarter of year 7 -10 students have a maths teacher teaching within their field every year.[19]

---

[18] Australian Education Union (2018), *Op. Cit.*

[19] Prince, G. & O'Connor, M., (2018) *AMSI Occasional Paper 1: Crunching the Numbers on Out-Of-Field Teaching*, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, p.3

AMSI found that to rectify this intractable problem maths teachers would need to be recruited at 160% of the current retirement rate to reduce out of field teaching to 10% within five years.[20]

The lack of trained maths teachers is a direct consequence of the current lack of attractiveness of teaching to university maths graduates, a discipline for which there is increasing employer demand. This inability of teaching to compete with other professions has major long term societal and economic implications. The long term impact of the dearth of new graduates becoming maths teachers is described by former AMSI Director, Professor Geoff Prince:

> *Out-of-field teaching in mathematics not only affects the learning outcomes of students, it limits our schools' ability to mount the intermediate and advanced subjects at Years 10 through 12 which lead to degrees in science, engineering, medicine and so on. It is worst in regional, remote and mid to low SES communities and is therefore an equity issue, not only limiting educational access but driving down adult numeracy. From an economic viewpoint it chokes the supply of mathematically and statistically capable professionals in an era of increasing demand.[21]*

Recommendation 7: The AEU recommends that a program of incentives is developed to encourage high performing graduates of hard to recruit subject areas (including STEM subjects and Languages Other Than English) to become teachers. This could include bursaries or scholarships or discounted HELP contributions for graduates from in demand subjects.

1.5   *Attracting Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders to the teaching profession*

The More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) was a national project funded by the then Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and managed by the University of South Australia through the office of Professor Peter Buckskin, Dean, Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research. The project commenced in 2011, and despite recommendations to support its continuation, based on robust research and evidence of positive outcomes, the project was finalised in 2016, with opportunities for its extension lost in changes to the machinery of government in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, following the election of the Abbott government in 2014[22].

The overarching objectives of the MATSITI project were to increase:

- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in teaching positions in schools;
- the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers; and
- the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in teaching positions in schools.

---

[20]*Ibid.* p.3

[21] *Ibid.,* p.2

[22] Rose, M., (2018), *Close the Gap: More Indigenous* Graduates, La Trobe University*, accessed at* https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2018/opinion/close-the-gap-more-indigenous-graduates

An independent evaluation of the initiative[23] found that project partners intensified their commitment to achieving MATSITI's aims through their formal participation in the project and further, that partners and stakeholders raised their awareness of the 'direct relationship between the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in schools and improvements in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.'[24] Finally, the project resulted in a 16.5% increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers between 2012 and 2015, "due to recruitment and improved levels of identification."[25]

Recommendation 8: The AEU recommends the committee refer to the MATSITI Project's extensive research archive, and to implement the recommendations from the MATSITI Project's Final Report[26], Evaluation Report[27], the Tarndanya Declaration[28]and the MATSITI teacher workforce scoping plan.[29]

1.6   The need for higher Initial Teacher Education admission standards

For many years the AEU has advocated for the consistent application of high level Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and we again reiterate our commitment to ensure that ITE providers uphold the qualification benchmarks that reinforce the higher level of knowledge, skills and expertise required to be a proficient teacher in contemporary public education. The process to register ITE programs must be rigorous and uphold the high standards expected by the teaching profession.

The deregulation of modern higher education in Australia has meant that the academic standards required to enter many tertiary courses, including initial teachers' education courses, are significantly lower than they should be, and lower than standards were in previous decades. A consequence of this decline in standards is a massive increase in the numbers of people undertaking ITE - in 2001 there were 54,000 people training to be teachers, in 2016 there were over 87,000.[30] In order to bolster the capabilities and status of the teaching profession it is imperative that this long term but recently accelerated decline in ITE entry standards is urgently reversed.

The worst case scenario in Australia's deregulated and under-funded higher education system would be one where ITE applicants are continued to be treated as cash cows by tertiary institutions, and an ever increasing number of ITE students are admitted with lower (or undisclosed) Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) scores and their fees are used by universities to cross subsidise the more in demand and more expensive courses on offer. This scenario would have dire implications for the status of the teaching profession and for

---

[23] Johnson, P., Cherednichenki, B. and Rose, M., *Evaluation of the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative Project*: *Final Report* (2016), accessed at http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MATSITI-2016-Project-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 6

[25] *Ibid.,* p. 6

[26] *Ibid.,* p. 118

[27] *Ibid.,* p. 122

[28] Accessed at http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/MATSITI-OurMobTeach-Declaration-V4.pdf

[29] NSW Government (2013), *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Scoping Plan,* accessed at http://matsiti.edu.au/plans/MATSITI-Scoping-Plan-June-2013.pdf

[30] NSW Department of Education (2018), *Workforce profile of NSW Teaching Profession 2016,* p. 24

Australian school students in the future. Unfortunately, the current low and declining average ATAR scores for ITE courses are consistent with just such a situation.[31]

The AEU's position is that minimum entry requirements should be adopted for selection into ITE to recruit the top 30% of students into the profession, with equivalent measures for those seeking entrance to ITE from points/pathways other than completion of schooling. This standard is not currently maintained in recruitment to ITE, and is actually declining. According to the most recent data from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the number of students entering ITE via a secondary education pathway with an ATAR lower than 70 has grown from 25% in 2006 to 42% in 2015.[32]

Dr Rachel Wilson of the University of Sydney has conducted an analysis of the ATAR scores of secondary students admitted to ITE from 2006 to 2015. It shows a rapid increase of students admitted to ITE without providing an ATAR to their university over last decade, coupled with a marked decline in high achieving students with ATARs of 70 or greater entering ITE. The trend from 2013 onwards shows a marked decline in the number of high performing students with ATARs of 70 and above admitted to ITE in conjunction with a long term trend from 2010 onwards, of places on ITE courses have increasingly been filled with students with ATARs of less than 60 with a steady increase of those with ATARs of less than 50 also being admitted to ITE.[33]

Figure 4: **All domestic undergraduate students admitted to ITE on the basis of secondary education (2006 – 2015)[34]**
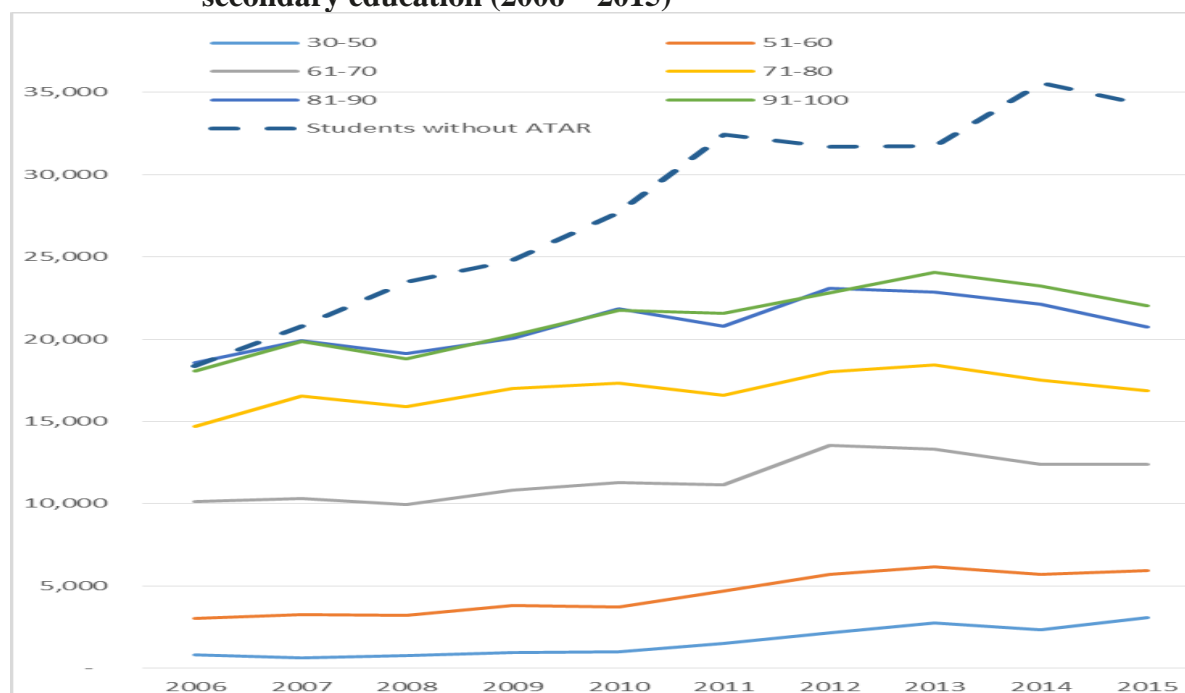
[31] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2017), *Insights. Initial teacher education: data report 2017,* Retrieved from https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/ite-data-report/2017/ite-data-report-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=a33fe93c_2

[32] *Ibid*, p.21

[33] Wilson, R., *Standards and Transparency in Intake to Teacher Education,* presentation to NSW Education Standards Authority, (April 12, 2018)

[34] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, cited in Wilson, *Op. cit.*

Figure 5: All domestic undergraduate students admitted to ITE with an ATAR score of 30-50 (2006 – 2015)[35]
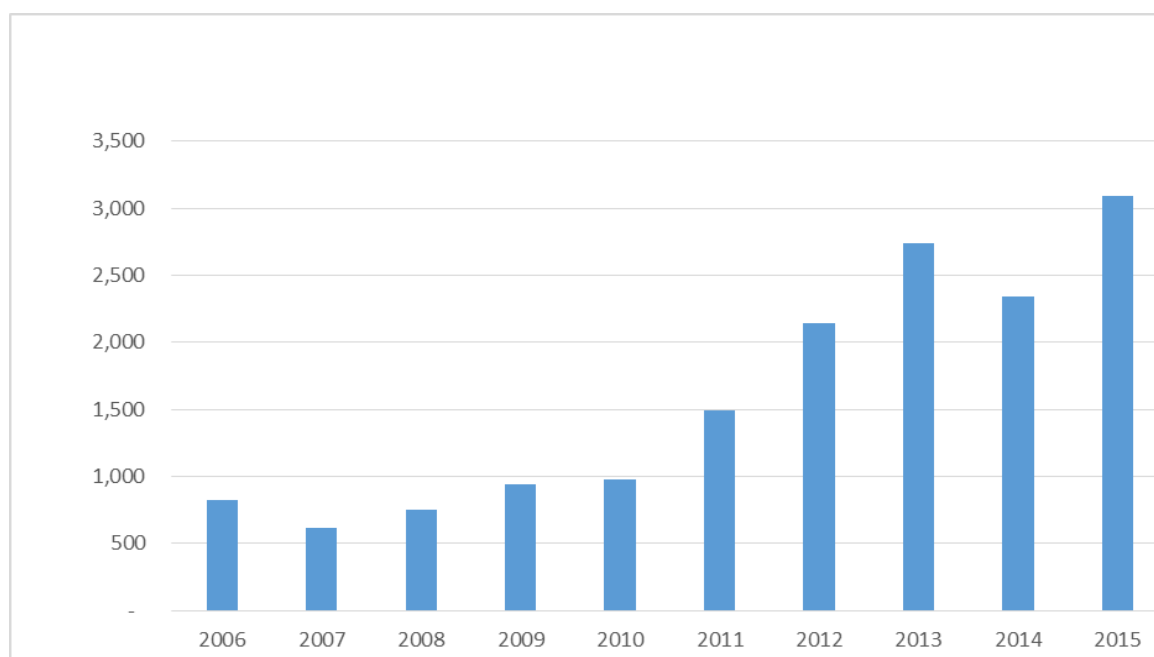
To improve teaching standards and teaching's status, the minimum ATAR for students accessing ITE from secondary education must be 70. Minimum entry requirements should be adopted for selection into ITE to recruit the top 30 per cent of students into the profession, with equivalent measures for those seeking entrance to ITE from points/pathways other than the completion of schooling.

Research conducted by Ingvarson et al shows that high performing countries have strict controls over access to ITE. For example, in Canada ITE institutions 'select trainees from the top 30 per cent of cohorts and pre-service teachers must have high grade point averages to gain entry to teacher training'.[36] In Singapore ITE applicants are subjected to a meticulous screening process. Decent wages and conditions along with job security were also factors in bolstering demand in all of the countries studied. Demand for ITE places in Finland significantly outstrips supply: only 10% of applicants are accepted into primary teacher training courses and consequently there are very high course completion rates, especially considering that the minimum qualification to become a primary or secondary teacher is a master's degree.[37]

Unfortunately this is not the case in Australia. Ingvarson describes the current state of low ATAR entry to ITE as "more of a recruitment problem than a selection problem" and argues that "tougher selection alone will not ensure that many more of our brightest graduates will see teaching as an attractive, high status career option and increase demand for places."[38] He

---

[35] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, cited in Wilson, *Op. cit.*

[36] Ingvarson, L., Reid, K., Buckley, S., Kleinhenz, E., Masters, G., Rowley , G. (t, 2014). Best Practice Teacher Education Programs and Australia's Own Programs. Canberra: Department of Education. Retrieved from http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=teacher_education, p.53

[37] *Ibid. p.53*

[38] *Ibid. p.xiii*

cites the results of surveys of secondary school students that show that although they see teaching as an important profession, the most able secondary students indicate that the lack of long term salary progression and career status prevents them from considering a career in teaching.

It has been the experience of AEU members that many tertiary education providers are extremely reluctant to fail students in ITE courses, despite very strong advice from practicum supervising teachers employed in schools. This only sets up the pre-service teacher and their future students for failure and eventual "burn out".

The risk of the above is particularly acute in jurisdictions which use the alternative authority to teach to bring unqualified and under-qualified people into classrooms. There is no evidence that this practice is in the interests of student learning, helps promote high standards or is a suitable mechanism for attracting and retaining people to the profession.

Evidence from the implementation of programs such as Teach for Australia (TFA) actually demonstrates the reverse; that it undermines quality and retention.

Where they have been implemented, such programs have been clearly demonstrated not to have a sustainable impact on teaching quality. Graduates are ill-prepared for the role and have a substantially higher drop-out rate from the profession than their fully qualified peers. Targeting the least qualified and experienced teachers to the most disadvantaged communities is not just counterintuitive; the model has not succeeded in its stated goals anywhere it has been implemented.

It is for these reasons that fast-tracked pathways into teaching such as the TFA program are detrimental to the quality and status of the teaching profession. The program is expensive, with the Commonwealth having provided $57 million for the program from 2008–09 to 2017–18, followed by additional funding of $20.5 million to 2020–21[39] (an investment that has yielded a total of alumni of 650) and saddled with high attrition rates. The evaluation report commissioned by the Commonwealth Department for Education and Training from management consultancy firm Dandolo Partners, shows that within a year of completing their two year placement more than a third of TFA associates have already stopped teaching, and that after three years less than half of all TFA associates are still employed as teachers.[40] The estimated cost of training each Teach for Australia alumnus who remains in the profession for at least three years is close to a quarter of a million dollars.[41]

The AEU is very concerned about the future impact of the trend towards the recruitment of unqualified and underqualified people as teachers, and the continuing efforts of some providers to normalise online training as the primary mode of ITE delivery. If the trend towards the recruitment of underqualified and unqualified ITE entrants continues it has the capacity to seriously undermine current efforts to raise standards and the status of the profession through teacher registration processes. The AEU has always held the qualifications of teachers to high standards and is steadfast in its position that there must not be any

---

[39] Answer to Question on Notice No. SQ17-000482, Additional Estimates 2016-2017, cited at http://www.saveourschools.com.au/teachers/teach-for-australia-fails-in-its-mission

[40] Dandolo Partners (2017). *Teach for Australia Program Evaluation Report*. retrieved from https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/final_tfa_public_report.pdf, p.16

[41] Total Commonwealth funding provided to Teach for Australia ($77.5 million) divided estimated maximum total alumni still working as teachers after three years (650/2)

weakening of either the content or entry requirements to ITE programs. The AEU is committed to a minimum four year undergraduate degree qualification for teachers, with a move to a five year equivalent qualification requirement for post-graduate teaching qualifications, and will oppose any lowering of qualification benchmarks from ITE providers or a registration authority.

Australia needs a systemic approach to preparing teachers for a successful career in the classroom and a more rigorous threshold to ensure that every teacher is actually ready to teach. If both are done well – and graduates gain secure forms of well-paid employment - a teaching credential becomes more meaningful and the status of the profession is upheld. The top-performing countries spend substantial time and resources to ensure that standards, programs and entry assessments are aligned and coherent. As found by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Professional Standards) and the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures provide a strong foundation for improvement and the maintenance of quality in ITE, however, they are not being effectively applied and implementation timeframes are too slow.

Teaching, like other respected professions, must have a universal assessment process for entry that includes rigorous preparation centred on academic study and professional experience, an in-depth test of subject and pedagogical knowledge, and a comprehensive teacher-readiness assessment.

Quality ITE preparation programs must be marked by higher entry standards, continuing performance standards, and exit standards, and must conclude with a strong induction program. Joint responsibility and support ITE providers, the profession, schools and employing authorities is required for this endeavour.

Recommendation 9: That minimum entry requirements should be adopted for selection into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to recruit the top 30% of students into the profession, with equivalent measures for those seeking entrance to ITE from points/pathways other than completion of schooling.

Recommendation 10: The AEU recommends the use of a range of measures being adopted by all ITE providers to ensure candidates for entry, in addition to high academic standards, display motivation, aptitude, capacity and commitment.

Recommendation 11: The AEU recommends that there is an urgent review of the use by some providers of predominantly online delivery for ITE, including a thorough published comparison of attrition, retention and compliance with the graduate and proficient career stages of those who received their training through primarily online delivery and those who did not.

Recommendation 12: In order to attract high achieving secondary graduates to ITE, teaching must be able to compete with in demand professions in terms of the level of continued and career long salary progression and professional development opportunities it provides, and that the funding and provision of ITE places be better coordinated in response to assessments of projected demand for teachers.

Recommendation 13: That the Education Council should develop a strategy and timeline to transition initial teacher education courses to two-year post graduate qualifications. Further, in order to protect the quality of school education, Commonwealth, state and territory governments should not fund or accredit "fast-tracked" initial teacher education programs such as Teach for Australia or similar. Comprehensive workforce planning should be undertaken across the states and territories, to provide more focussed and better resourced delivery of ITE and maximise the retention of high quality entrants and graduates in the teacher workforce.

1.7   The need for increased regulation of ITE course providers and content

It is vital that ITE course standards are properly regulated. Unfortunately, as Ingvarson et al point out, the proliferation of ITE providers in Australia places state and national accrediting bodies under severe pressure:

> The large number of small programs places a heavy burden on Australia's accreditation system. Countries such as Finland and Chinese Taipei concentrated teacher education in a smaller number of well-resourced universities some years ago, as part of a long-term strategy to lift the quality of teacher education and the status of teaching. Consideration should be given to the possible benefits of a similar policy for Australia. Consideration might be given to the model in England and Wales where funding has only been available for programs that are attracting students who meet a designated entry standard.[42]

They go on to point out that many of the systems described above engage in coordinated workforce planning of a type that would be incompatible with Australia's current uncapped and deregulated tertiary system. ITE places in these systems are allocated on the basis of projected demand.

Consideration should be given to a more regulated and coordinated approach to ITE funding and accreditation in Australia. There is scope to introduce at a national level a study similar to Victoria's Teacher Supply and Demand Report to inform such a system.

Such a process could also help to identify difficult-to-staff schools and subject areas. As shown in the data from the *State of Our Schools* above, staffing shortages and recruitment difficulties are an issue in over 60% of schools, with the proportion increasing year on year. Often these are remote schools and schools in low SES and/or Indigenous communities; LOTE, STEM, Indigenous education and special education are often subject areas for which it can be difficult to obtain qualified teachers.[43] As mentioned above, and shown most starkly through the recent AMSI analysis previously summarised in this submission, teachers in these areas are more likely than others to be teaching out of field.

Nationally and internationally there are a range of policies designed to address issues with difficult to staff schools and subject areas although there has been little rigorous evaluation of these. The AEU's submission to the Productivity Commission's study of the Schools, Education and Training Workforce lists some of these including "Strong sustained nation-

---

[42] Ingvarson, et al, *Op. cit,* p.xv

[43] AEU (2011), Australian Education Union Submission to the Productivity Commission Study: Schools Education and Training Workforce. Retrieved from https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/education-workforce-schools/submissions/sub028.pdf, p.15

wide communications and public relations campaigns", financial support for ITE for promising candidates in shortage subject areas, improved work conditions, and increased professional autonomy.[44]

It is the policy of the AEU that all Australian ITE courses should transition to two-year postgraduate qualifications to ensure that teachers have a superior capacity to meet an expansive range of student needs including those of Indigenous students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and students with disability. The Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) agrees and stated in their response to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Board's Issues Paper that "Graduate students have demonstrated achievement and persistence at tertiary studies and bring maturity and knowledge and skills that provide a solid platform from which to develop specific pedagogical understandings".[45]

Recommendation 14: That a more thoroughly regulated and coordinated approach to ITE funding and accreditation in Australia, reviewing the number and output of ITE providers and using metrics of Teacher Supply and Demand to determine where greater ITE capacity is required.

2. Provision of appropriate support platforms for teachers, including human and IT resources

2.1 Improved access to induction, mentoring and continuing professional development for teachers

The need for more and better professional development throughout the course of teachers' entire careers was highlighted in the 2017 International Summit on the Teaching Profession Report:

> Preparing our students to thrive in this fast-changing and highly connected world will place even greater demands on teachers. The knowledge base of the profession is becoming ever more complex. The rapid changes in content knowledge in many fields and educators' broadening responsibilities for inculcating new competencies suggest that teacher policies now urgently need to take a career-long perspective on the development of teacher professionalism.[46]

TALIS data shows that teacher self-efficacy increases with access to mentoring and professional development and that teacher self-efficacy is also positively related to student outcomes.[47] TALIS also found that for new teachers, access to mentors was beneficial for their self-efficacy and other outcomes:

---

[44] *Ibid,* p.17

[45] MGSE (2014). A response to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Board's Issues Paper on behalf of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Retrieved from https://submissions.education.gov.au/Forms/TEMAG/_layouts/SP.Submissions/ViewDoc.ashx?id=%7B0b89f457-18a0-48bd-832b-e837ad42cc1e%7D, p.1

[46] Asia Society (2017). *2017 International Summit on the Teaching Profession*. Retrieved from http://asiasociety.org/global-cities-education-network/empowering-and-enabling-teachers-improve-equity-and-outcomes-all

[47] OECD (2014), *TALIS 2013Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning,* TALIS, OECD Publishing, p.184

When mentoring is considered, however, it seems that for new teachers specifically, time spent with a mentor, participation in mentor-facilitated professional development activities and the quality of mentors' interactions are significantly related to the teachers' self-efficacy and their development of effective collaborative relationships.[48]

Meaningful access to mentors for new teachers, however, can only be facilitated by time-release that is supported by appropriate staff/student ratios. In October 2017, the AEU surveyed 1405 teachers who had been mentors to early career teachers in the last three years. Only 15% of these teachers had been provided with time release to support their roles as mentors whilst only 18% had the opportunity to share experiences and work with other mentors at their own or other schools. As one of the teachers surveyed by the AEU explains:

> Mentor teachers need release time in order to properly coach their early career teachers. The two teachers need release time together specifically for discussing and acting upon mentoring related issues and topics. Mentors need to either receive training of some kind or have prior recognition. Mentors should not be chosen simply due to seniority within a school.

The AEU's 2018 *State of Our Schools* survey paints a bleak picture of the amount and quality of induction, professional development and mentoring support facilitated by state Departments of Education. 28% of principals surveyed said that their education department does not provide them with a training or professional development program for mentors, 38% are not provided with funding to release mentors and 27% said they are not provided with a useful induction program for early career teachers. Additionally, half of principals stated that their access to professional development including the provision of programs and relief teachers was not effective and only 4.0% described it as very effective.

The following three elements are identified by the OECD as common characteristics among the highest performing countries; a mandatory and extended period of clinical practice as part of pre-service teacher education or of the induction period; the presence of a variety of bespoke opportunities for in-service teachers' professional development, such as workshops organised by the school; and teacher-appraisal mechanisms with a strong focus on teachers' continuous development.[49] It is clear from the evidence collected by the AEU from teachers and principals that they are not receiving the necessary support from state governments to acquit this requirement. Career long learning and professional development opportunities are essential to keep teachers engaged and to increase the attractiveness of the teaching to the most able school leavers, and essential to enhance the status of the profession.

Recommendation 15: The AEU recommends that the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training facilitate the provision of effective induction, professional development and mentoring programs in schools for teachers and principals. Options for doing this include the provision of incentives such as matched contributions to states and territories for induction, mentoring and containing professional development (separate and above agreed Commonwealth, State and Territory SRS amounts) or through a national programme administered by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training

---

[48] *Ibid*, p.194

[49] OECD (2018), *Effective Teacher Policies: Insights from PISA*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264301603-en .p.17

itself. This greater level of systemic support for mentoring support must include time-release for participating mentors, teachers and principals.

2.2   Addressing inequity in teacher resourcing in disadvantaged and rural and remote schools

It stands to reason that under resourced schools have lower levels of teacher satisfaction and higher levels of attrition and turnover than well-resourced schools. Australia is the only high performing OECD country where schools in disadvantaged areas are resourced to a lower level than schools in the most advantaged areas.[50] Australia continually stands out among OECD countries because of its failure to allocate resources where they are most needed and the impact of this failure is felt most heavily in public schools. Data derived from PISA 2015, summarised in table 2 below, shows that teachers and students in Australia's disadvantaged schools are systematically denied the resources that are essential for effective teaching and learning, and that are available to their more advantages peers. They have higher student/teacher ratios and more teacher shortages. This leads to more teachers teaching out-of-field and the recruitment of less experienced teachers. This in turn increases teacher turnover, and the number of teachers employed on short term insecure contracts. [51]

The driver of all these impacts on teaching resources in disadvantaged schools is a lack of true needs based funding equity. Changes to the Commonwealth Education Act which add potential ceilings to the level of state and territory SRS contributions and the recent National Schools Reform Agreements mean that the majority of states and territories will not reach 100% of the SRS in the foreseeable future, and many do not have any proposed timeline for meeting it at all. It is these funding shortfalls, and a lack of high level ITE aimed specifically at recruiting to disadvantaged schools that prevent the development of the resources needed to uphold the qualification benchmarks expected for all schools - those that reinforce the higher level of knowledge, skills and expertise required to be a proficient teacher.

PISA 2015 also shows that teachers at disadvantaged schools in Australia are more likely to be inadequately or poorly qualified than teachers at advantaged schools, and that there are over six times more students in disadvantaged schools than in advantaged schools where the principal reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered by a lack of properly qualified teaching staff. [52]

---

[50] Trevor Cobbold (2018), Massive Gaps in Teacher Resources Between Disadvantaged and Advantaged Schools In Australia.pdf, Save Our Schools, Oct. 2018

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] *Ibid*

Table 2: **Teaching Resources in Disadvantaged and Advantaged Schools in Australia**[53]

	Disadvantaged Schools	Advantaged Schools
Students per teacher (no.)	12.6	11.6
Teacher shortage (% of schools)	35.6	6.3
Teacher absenteeism (% of students in schools where teacher absenteeism hinders learning)	21.1	5.6
Out-of-field teaching (science)	25.0	15.4
Out-of-field teaching (other subjects)	21.7	15.5
Students in schools with poorly qualified teachers (%)	31.9	4.8
Students in schools with teachers not well-prepared for classes (%)	20.7	5.8
Average years of teaching (science %)	14.3	17.5
Less than 5 years' experience (science teachers %)	26.5	17.4
Less than 5 years' experience (other teachers %)	22.8	14.6
On contract of 1 year or less (science %)	12.0	8.9
On contract of 1 year or less (other teachers %)	12.5	9.7

In addition to the focused induction, mentoring and professional development programs required to equip all teachers with the support require to progress through the standards, disadvantaged schools are in need of a much greater level of support and investment to ensure that they can compete with advantaged schools when it comes to attracting highly qualified and skilled teachers.

Much higher levels of investment in IT systems and infrastructure are required along with the application of uniform standards in the quality and quantity of the IT resources available to teachers. In order to achieve this, the Commonwealth Department for Education and Training should provide a greater level of oversight of IT and technology resources in schools across all states and territories.

As noted previously in this submission, there are more people entering ITE than ever before, but intractable teacher shortages and a huge number of teachers teaching out-of-field, predominantly in STEM subjects, means that teacher shortages are rife, particularly at under resourced, disadvantaged and remote and rural schools. It is essential that personnel and resource management systems are put in place to address supply and demand within the

---

[53] OECD (2018), *Effective Teacher Policies: Insights from PISA*, 2018, Online tables. cited in Trevor Cobbold, Massive Gaps in Teacher Resources Between Disadvantaged and Advantaged Schools In Australia.pdf, Save Our Schools, Oct. 2018

teaching workforce and that there is a systemic workforce planning is enacted to ensure a workforce that is diverse and reflective of the community it serves.

To encourage and attract this highly skilled and diverse workforce, teachers must be offered secure and ongoing employment.

The attraction and retention of staff in non-metropolitan schools was addressed by the MCEETYA Taskforce on Rural and Remote Education, Training, Employment and Children's Services and the goals it promoted to address this issue are still sound. Many of these goals are as equally relevant to improving the status of teachers and providing support to encourage attraction and retention in all schools. These goals include:

- continuing to promote the contextual and professional advantages of working in remote, isolated and rural areas in addition to offering financial and industrial conditions packages
- raising the profile of the profession by acknowledgment of the professional qualities of country teachers, leaders and support staff
- expanding scholarships and funded programs targeted at increasing the teacher and education support for personnel trained and prepared to serve for extended periods in rural, regional and remote locations
- the establishment of a national centre for rural education research and training and development which incorporates current initiatives and programs, and which focuses on partnerships and inter-agency strategies to drive local capacity building
- implementing programs and initiatives that recognise and enhance access to local community leadership and expertise[54]

Recommendation 16: That in order to attract and retain teachers to disadvantaged and/or remote or rural schools, both the Commonwealth and state governments must focus on the relationship between system quality, access and equity including how resources are distributed between schools and how the necessary professional, HR and IT support can be made available across all schools

3 Identifying ways in which the burden of out-of-hours, at-home work can be reduced

Workload and excessive out-of-hours work is a key cause of low morale, and ultimately of attrition among both principals and teachers. In a survey conducted for the AEU's submission to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (2017) nearly half of 478 principals reported that they worked for 56 hours or more per week. Principals reported that they spent the largest proportion of their time on complying with departmental requirements (21%) but only 14% of their time leading teaching and learning (see Table 3 below).

---

[54] MCEETYA (2000). *National Framework for Rural and Remote Education*. Retrieved from http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/rural_file.pdf

Table 3:   What proportion of your time is spent on the following?

Principal activity	Proportion of time spent (%)
Complying with departmental requirements	21
Leading teaching and learning	14
Developing self and others	8
Managing student well-being	15
Managing teacher well-being	8
Leading improvement and innovation	8
Leading the management of the school	15
Engaging and working with the community	7
Other	3

Similarly, OECD data also show that teacher's job satisfaction and self-efficacy are negatively related to the time they spend on administrative tasks, particularly in Australia.[55] Nearly three quarters of the 3,591 teachers surveyed by the AEU (73%) felt that they spent too much time on administrative tasks. Increased support from either central or regional offices or from extra staff within schools could free up teachers' time to increase their focus on teaching and learning. Nearly 92% of teachers reported they had insufficient time outside of classes for lesson planning, marking, report writing and administration work within their paid working hours.

3.1   The impact of workload and excessive working hours

Both the Victorian branch of the AEU, and the NSW Teachers Federation have conducted extensive studies of teachers' workloads and average weekly working hours in recent years, and both have found that teachers are working substantially more hours than contracted at significantly higher levels than the OECD average, and are undertaking a very large amount of work at home and during holidays. In NSW, a survey of over 18,000 teachers found that the average full time teacher is working 55 hours per week during term time, with 43 hours per week at school on average and a further 11 hours per week at home.[56] In Victoria, classroom teachers in both Primary and secondary schools reported working an average of 53 hours per week, and leading teachers reported working an average of 55 hours per week. All teachers spent an average of between 11.5 and 13 hours per week engaged in work outside of their required work time.[57] As pointed out by McGrath-Champ et al, Both the Victorian and NSW average working hours, are considerably higher than the OECD average, which measures teachers' required hours in Australia overall at approximately 1,200 hours per year. McGrath-Champ, et al extrapolate teachers' reported hours in NSW to approximately 1,720 hours per year, suggesting they are high on an international scale, and exceeding their contractual workloads by up to 43%.[58]

In the Victorian workload study, only about one fifth of teachers said that that their workload is often or nearly always manageable, and about the same proportion felt that they often or nearly always had a good balance between home and work. 90 % of teachers indicated that

---

[55] OECD (2014). *Talis 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, TALIS, OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en

[56] McGrath-Champ, S. et al., *Op. cit,* p 28

[57] Weldon, P. & Ingvarson, L. (2016), *School Staff Workload Survey: Final Report to the Australian Education Union Victorian Branch*, p.9

[58] McGrath-Champ, S., et al., *Op. cit,* p 28

their workload at some stage has had a negative effect on their quality of teaching, and most alarmingly, over a third of teachers in all schools indicated that their workload often or nearly always adversely affected their health.[59] Among teachers with over four years' experience who told us they are thinking the profession, over three quarters (78%) cited workload as the primary factor.

The consistency of these results across states and across teachers of all levels of experience in both primary and secondary schools, clearly indicates that work in schools simply is too great in volume to be undertaken in the time available at school. The workload burden on teachers in Australia is immense, and the general acceptance of teachers' working up to the equivalent of two additional days per week for sustained periods of time and indeed often on a permanent basis, and being swamped with additional tasks only tangentially related to their practice, is one of the factors most frequently cited by teachers as the reason for burn out and attrition. A teacher from the NSW Teachers Federation workload study describes the experience:

> *"I am currently on leave from the Head Teacher position and am working as a classroom teacher. This decision was due to excessive work hours, averaging 80+ hours per week in term and 50+ hours in "holidays" as a Head Teacher for 6 years. The stress of this unsustainable workload left me physically exhausted and mentally drained. Total burn out. Having been working as a classroom teacher for a year, I still feel unable to resume my duties, although I am gradually recovering. I felt there was no real support for me in [the] couple of years building up to this decision. I was told to re-prioritise, but when I did, I was continually instructed to do things I had prioritised at a low level"[60]*

3.2   How to address excessive workloads

At the 2018 AEU Federal Conference, the union highlighted the excessive and increasing workload of teachers and principals and asserted that increasing workloads for teachers are "symptomatic of growing social inequality, demands on schools to address social ills with the resources or time to do so, and intrusive, onerous and prescriptive "accountability regimes diverting resources from teaching and learning."[61]

The conference pre-emptively addressed some of the principal questions of this inquiry, when it resolved that "addressing excessive workload is fundamental to the appreciation of teaching as a profession and the attraction and retention of teachers in that profession – whether as teachers or educational leaders." [62] The resolutions passed at that conference form the basis of the following recommendations.

Recommendation 17: The AEU recommends that governments address the issue of workload by ensuring that there is systemic resource allocation

Recommendation 18: That the teaching profession and it union representatives are involved in the consideration and implementation of educational change at the

---

[59] Weldon, *Op. cit.,* p 38

[60] McGrath-Champ, S. et al., *Op.cit.,* p 35

[61] Australian Education Union (2018), *Report of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Federal Conference* , p. 31

[62] *Ibid,* p.31

national, state and local levels, and the formal assessment of the workload implications supporting resources required for any change prior to its adoption

Recommendation 19: That the professional autonomy of teachers to promote sustainable workloads is recognised and respected by governments and departments of education

4. Investigating ways to increase retention rates for the teaching profession, and avoid "burn out" among early-career teachers

4.1 Improving retention through secure employment

All of the recommendations we have made to enhance and improve the status of the teaching up to this point in this submission will also materially improve teachers' experience and enjoyment of their work and serve to reduce burn out and increase retention. Poor ITE entry standards, a lack of robust assessment during training, minimal opportunity for reflection and engagement with colleagues, little classroom experience prior to commencement and poor application of the national standards all contribute to high attrition rates among newly trained teachers. The AEU has been working for some time with members regarding concerns about workload associated with both the transition from provisional to full registration and the insecurity caused by the fixed period of registration. This workload is also acutely felt by school leaders or other professional mentors working in areas with high concentrations of early career teachers, such as regional and remote schools.

The last review on the status of teachers, published 20 years ago, recommended a reversal of the trend to casualization of the teaching force.[63] In the intervening two decades it appears as it little to no action been taken towards this goal in most jurisdictions in Australia. There is an increasing trend towards precarious and insecure employment in teaching, and there is a substantial body of evidence showing that a lack of ongoing employment, job security and salary levels commensurate with experience are pushing attrition and reducing retention among both early career and experienced teachers (Plunket & Dyson 2011) (Mason & Poyatos Matas 2015) (Mayer et.al, 2015).[64]

It is becoming increasingly common, across jurisdictions to varying degrees, that teachers commence their employment with a period of contract or temporary employment (sometimes of many years), rather than moving directly into permanent or ongoing employment. The *State of Our Schools* survey demonstrates in stark terms the relationship between insecure employment and a willingness to consider leaving teaching. The percentage of teachers employed on a non-permanent basis who said that they were more likely to leave teaching because of their insecure employment was particularly high among teachers whose current contracts are for three years or less (70%) and for those who have worked as teachers for between four and ten years (76%), noticeably higher than for teachers with less than three years' experience (69%). Overall, two thirds of teachers not employed permanently said that

---

[63] Commonwealth of Australia (1998), *A Class Act: An Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*, Canberra, p.11

[64] Willet, M, Segal, D, Walford, W & (Ernst & Young), June 2014, *National Teaching Workforce Dataset data analysis report*, Canberra: Australian Government - Department of Education, cited by AITSL, *Spotlight: What do we know about early career attrition rates in Australia?* (2016), p. 10.

their insecure status made it more likely that they would leave teaching prior to retirement age.

This substantial increase in the percentage of experienced teachers who say they are more likely to leave the profession early due to a lack of ongoing permanent employment is likely to be indicative of increasing frustration at not being able to get a foothold within the profession and achieve permanency, even after accruing significant experience. The incidence of those who say they are more likely to leave teaching prior to retirement due to a lack of permanency reduces with length of experience from 10 years onwards, to 64% for teachers with 11 – 20 years' experience and 44% for teachers with more than 20 years' experience. Although this may seem counterintuitive, it is likely related to the characteristics of those who are retained within the teaching profession on insecure contracts for extended time periods, in that those who have remained within the profession for a decade or more without permanency are more likely to tolerate ongoing insecurity.

The AEU explicitly asked teachers which factors would help retain teachers in the profession, and more than half (51%) of all respondents stated that the primary influencing factor would be a reduction in excessive workloads.

Out of hours work, workload, burn out and attrition are inextricably linked. AEU members have consistently told us that their workloads are too high and the amount of work required of them away from school is too great.

Recommendation 20: That high levels of insecure employment within the teaching profession be addressed by governments and education departments, with a concerted plan to reduce insecure employment, in particular for staff employed on casual and short term contracts.

Conclusion

Public funding of education in Australia has been in decline for over a decade. In 2005, public education funding accounted for 10.6% of total government expenditure and in 2018 this has reduced to 9.3%, significantly below the OECD average of 11.0%.[65] Teachers are subject to ever increasing workloads, class sizes and demands on their time away from the classroom all of which are now in excess of OECD averages.[66] This lack of investment over a prolonged period of time has caused Australia to decline in OECD rankings for both the preparedness of teachers entering the profession and for student outcomes.

Since the last inquiry into the status of teachers, held twenty years ago, there has been a further decline in the attractiveness of teaching to high achieving young people primarily due to the stagnation of teachers' pay and opportunities for progression, increases in workload and subsequent burnout, and the entrenchment of insecure and precarious employment as the norm for graduate teachers.

---

[65] OECD, *Education at a Glance,* cited at http://www.aeufederal.org.au/news-media/media-releases/2018/september/120918
[66] *Ibid.*

To understand the true impact of these drivers on the status of the teaching profession, and specifically on recruitment quality and on retention levels, the inquiry needs to examine the career stages at which people leave the profession, and the primary drivers for them doing so. We have shown the impact that continued insecurity has on the retention of early and mid-career teachers, and the disheartening impact of a lack of professional autonomy and the diminishment of professional value through being forced to teach out-of-field for extended periods for experienced teachers. For all teachers the impact of consistently very high workloads, administrative creep, capped pay and flat salary scales are all causes that force them out of the profession.

Teachers must have access to clear pathways of career progression, and the requisite professional development and support to actually progress, they must also be fairly renumerated and not subject to excessive or unreasonable demands in terms of the volume or the intensity of scheduling of their work, and they must have access to the best and most appropriate resources to ensure that they are not spending inordinate amounts of time on administrative or clerical tasks, or involved in the needless replication of work. The teaching profession needs a strong, well-funded education system where the formulation of policies on recruitment and training, professional development and resourcing benefit from substantial and ongoing input from the profession itself.

We have shown that current ITE standards need to be rigorously assessed and regulated. However, the ongoing development and maintenance of high standards of teacher practice and professional development are not simply the responsibility of the institutions that train teachers. The profession must have clear and established structures and mechanisms, supported by government, to support teachers throughout their career. Teachers' professional autonomy must be acknowledged, while at the same time initial teacher education and continuing professional development must collaborative and cooperative professional learning.

The current status of the teaching profession needs to be urgently supported and improved, and in this submission we have provided numerous and specific recommendations for action to address a range of current shortcomings. These recommendations have been formed not just to improve teachers working conditions, but to improve standards and introduce workforce sustainability sector wide. We sincerely hope that it does not take another twenty years and another inquiry to see them enacted.

Annex: List of recommendations

1. Increasing the attractiveness of the profession for teachers and principals, including workplace conditions, and career and leadership structures

Recommendation 1
That enhancing the status of the teaching profession and achieving excellence in all Australian schools requires a strong public education system, including a focus on the relationship between system quality, access and equity and including how resources are distributed to effectively address varying level of need across schools and systems. This includes the provision of appropriate human resources, time-allocations, materials, support structure and personnel, professional development and physical infrastructure. (p.6)

Recommendation 2
That in order to enhance the status of the teaching profession it is necessary to enable teachers a greater level of control over assessment and curriculum, and to reverse the drive towards explicit instruction and one size fits all national assessment. Support for professional autonomy in teaching, curriculum development and assessment and reporting must be increased and then maintained. (p.6)

Recommendation 3
That federal organisations which set policy and procedures that impact directly on education must have decision making processes that involve education unions as the representative and accountable voice of the teaching profession. (p.6)

Recommendation 4
That a comprehensive review of NAPLAN is undertaken, focusing on whether the current approach to standardised testing is fit for purpose, which should be to provide a snapshot of student learning at a single point in time from a random sample over a large population to provide the system-wide information required to support planning and resource allocation and enable governments and education systems to fulfil their responsibility to provide funding for programs in areas identified as in need. (p.8)

Recommendation 5
That the use of standardised testing, such as NAPLAN, as a scorecard for individual schools or groups of students in those schools, as currently promoted through the My School website, is ceased. (p.8)

Recommendation 6
That greater centralised systemic support and improved access to continuous professional development for school leaders and particularly new principals is crucial to build and maintain effective educational leadership and must be supported and resourced by education systems. (p.8)

Recommendation 7
That a program of incentives is developed to encourage high performing graduates of hard to recruit subject areas (including STEM subjects and Languages Other Than English) to become teachers. This could include bursaries or scholarships or discounted HELP contributions for graduates from in demand subjects. (p.11)

Recommendation 8
That the inquiry committee refer to the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) Project's extensive research archive on increasing the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, and to implement the recommendations from project's Final Report, Evaluation Report, the Tarndanya Declaration and the MATSITI teacher workforce scoping plan. (p12)

Recommendation 9
That minimum entry requirements should be adopted for selection into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to recruit the top 30% of students into the profession, with equivalent measures for those seeking entrance to ITE from points/pathways other than completion of schooling. (p.16)

Recommendation 10
That a range of measures are adopted by all ITE providers to ensure candidates for entry to ITE display motivation, aptitude, capacity and commitment, in addition to high academic standards, display (p.16)

Recommendation 11
That there is an urgent review of the use by some providers of predominantly online delivery for ITE, including a thorough published comparison of attrition, retention and compliance with the graduate and proficient career stages of the professional standards between those who received their training through primarily online delivery and those who did not. (p.16)

Recommendation 12
In order to attract high achieving secondary graduates to ITE, teaching must be able to compete with in demand professions in terms of the level of continued and career long salary progression and professional development opportunities it provides, and that the funding and provision of ITE places be better coordinated in response to assessments of projected demand for teachers. (p.16)

Recommendation 13
That the Education Council should develop a strategy and timeline to transition initial teacher education courses to two-year post graduate qualifications. Further, in order to protect the quality of school education, Commonwealth, state and territory governments should not fund or accredit 'fast-tracked' initial teacher education programs such as Teach for Australia or similar. Comprehensive workforce planning should be undertaken across the states and territories, to provide more focussed and better resourced delivery of ITE and maximise the retention of high quality entrants and graduates in the teacher workforce. (p. 16-17)

Recommendation 14
That a more thoroughly regulated and coordinated approach to ITE funding and accreditation in Australia, reviewing the number and output of ITE providers and using metrics of Teacher Supply and Demand to determine where greater ITE capacity is required. (p.18)

2. Provision of appropriate support platforms for teachers, including human and IT resources

Recommendation 15
That the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training facilitate the provision of effective induction, professional development and mentoring programs in schools for teachers and principals. Options for doing this include the provision of incentives such as matched contributions to states and territories for induction, mentoring and continuing professional development (separate and above agreed Commonwealth, State and Territory SRS amounts) or through a national programme administered by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training itself. This greater level of systemic support for mentoring support must include time-release for participating mentors, teachers and principals. (p.19)

Recommendation 16
That in order to attract and retain teachers to disadvantaged and/or remote or rural schools, both the Commonwealth and state governments must focus on the relationship between system quality, access and equity including how resources are distributed between schools how the necessary professional, HR and IT support can be made available across all schools. (p.22)

3. Identifying ways in which the burden of out-of-hours, at-home work can be reduced

Recommendation 17
The AEU recommends that governments address the issue of workload by ensuring that there is systemic resource allocation (p.24)

Recommendation 18 That the teaching profession and it union representatives are involved in the consideration and implementation of educational change at the national, state and local levels, and the formal assessment of the workload implications supporting resources required for any change prior to its adoption (p.24)

Recommendation 19 That the professional autonomy of teachers to promote sustainable workloads is recognised and respected by governments and departments of education (p.25)

4. Investigating ways to increase retention rates for the teaching profession, and avoid 'burn out' among early-career teachers

Recommendation 20
That high levels of insecure employment within the teaching profession be addressed by governments and education departments, and that a concerted plan to reduce insecure employment, in particular for staff employed on casual and short term contracts is published (p.26)