Early career teachers considering leaving the profession



Early career teachers are reporting overwhelming workloads, insufficient support and inadequate preparation through initial teacher education (ITE), causing many to consider leaving the profession, according to a new AEU survey.

The AEU has released new educator data from the *State of Our Schools 2025* survey, a national report revealing a deeply concerning picture for Australia's teacher workforce pipeline.

The survey of 800 early career teachers with zero to three years' experience shows that only 18 per cent are certain they will stay in teaching for their entire career and 30 per cent expect to leave within 10 years, with excessive workload, student behaviour and insecure employment driving many to consider leaving.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the findings highlight an urgent national challenge.

"Fixing teacher shortages starts with keeping the new teachers we already have," she said.

"These early career teachers are the future of our profession, yet too many are already burning out. They are working extraordinary hours, facing increasingly complex student needs and far too many are doing so without the mentoring and support they were promised.

"If we are serious about addressing the teacher shortage crisis, governments must invest in proper induction, mentoring and secure jobs for new educators, not just leave them to simply sink or swim."

The report shows new educators work an average of 47.2 hours per week, with 74 per cent working more than 40 hours and nearly one-third working more than 50 hours. Only 59 per cent are employed permanently, compared to 87 per cent of all teachers.

ITE remains a key pressure point: new educators rated their ITE experience just 5.9 out of 10, a decline from 6.8 in 2018.

Nationally, 43 per cent said their training did not prepare them well for the classroom, and only five per cent felt “very well” prepared.

Critical gaps were identified in managing difficult behaviour, teaching students with disability, supporting student wellbeing and working with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Only five per cent of new educators received any follow-up from their ITE provider after graduating.

Support in schools is inconsistent. While 61 per cent had a designated mentor, one in four new educators had no access to a mentor, and only 45 per cent said their mentor was readily available. Meaningful induction and structured support remain the exception rather than the norm.

To address these issues, the AEU is calling for the establishment of a national early career guarantee that includes reduced teaching hours, classroom release time for mentors, an orientation program and structured networking opportunities for teachers in their first three years.

“New educators have told us exactly what they need: secure jobs, reduced workloads in their first years, high-quality mentoring and ITE that genuinely prepares them for today’s classrooms,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“Australia cannot afford to lose another generation of teachers. Governments must act now, with national workforce planning and guaranteed workload relief for early career teachers.”

The AEU is calling on the federal government to:

- Introduce a national early career guarantee with reduced teaching hours, mentoring and networking for teachers in their first three years.
- Reduce primary classes from an average of 23 students to the OECD average of 21.
- Allocate an additional two hours a week for teachers to plan lessons and collaborate with their colleagues.
- Increase the number of trained education support staff in the classroom.
- Increase the numbers of administration and support staff in schools to reduce teacher and principal workloads.
- Improve systemic support for teachers educating students with complex needs.

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