World Teachers' Day: Governments must address growing workloads or lose teachers



AEU

On World Teachers' Day the AEU has called on all governments to recognise the long-term effects of rising workloads on teachers by ensuring all schools have the resources they need.

The AEU's 2016 State of Our Schools survey found that 77 per cent of teachers say their workload has increased in the last year alone, and 69 per cent say workloads are making it more difficult to retain staff.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the results should be a warning to all governments to properly resource schools to reduce the stresses on teachers and school leaders.

"The theme of this year's World Teachers' Day is ' valuing teachers, improving their status' and the best way governments can show they are valuing teachers is to ensure they are properly supported in the classroom.

"We are alarmed to see a big rise in the number of teachers raising concerns about workload in just one year. This is a strong indication that demands on teachers are reaching a critical point.

"Our survey shows teachers are committed to the profession and the vast majority want to stay for the long term, but we are at risk of losing thousands of experienced, high-quality teachers who are facing increasing workloads and a lack of support.

"It is deeply frustrating for our committed and passionate teachers when they do not have the time do deal with paperwork, prepare lessons and give each student the attention they need."

The AEU's 2016 State of our Schools survey found that public school teachers were working significantly more hours in 2016 than 2015, with an increasing number saying they were considering leaving the profession.

Key findings of the 2016 survey include:

- 77% of teachers say their workload has increased in the last year, and just 2% say it has decreased.
- 26% of teachers say they are working more than 55 hours per week (up from 23% in the 2015 survey) and another 45% say more than 45 hours (up from 42 per cent in the 2015 survey).
- There has been significant growth in the number of teachers who believe it is getting more difficult to retain teachers: now up to 69% from 58% in 2015.
- While only 17% of teachers are considering leaving the profession, this number has increased from 14% in 2015.
- For these teachers workload is by far the biggest issue, with 74% saying it would be the most important factor in any decision to leave, up from 66% in 2015.

Ms Haythorpe said that international evidence showed Australian teachers worked longer hours and had bigger classes than the global average.

“Our public school teachers are also working in one of the most inequitably funded school systems in the world, which adds to workload pressures."

“The Gonski resources which are starting to be delivered are making a real difference but we need the full six years of funding to properly address the gaps in resources which have left disadvantaged students behind.

“If governments truly want to value teachers and improve the status of the profession, they will ensure teachers are supported in the classroom so that students can get the help they need."

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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