Turnbull Government must stop pouring taxpayer funds into expensive, failing Teach For Australia program

The Australian Education Union has urged the Federal Government to stop wasting taxpayer money by funding the Teach for Australia Program. A new report released today reveals that over half its participants have left the profession within three years of becoming qualified teachers.

Correna Haythorpe, Federal President of the Australian Education Union said the program was an expensive failure and was not succeeding in retaining teachers in areas of high disadvantage.

“The Federal Government continues to pour taxpayer money into this program despite its poor outcomes. Our teachers must have access to proper training rather than being dropped in the deep end without sufficient experience or support,” said Ms Haythorpe.

“This evaluation report reveals the program’s extremely poor track-record. Within three years of becoming qualified teachers over half the participants have left the profession and less than one third are teaching in schools with above average levels of student disadvantage. This is a serious warning sign that the program is not working. Only around 10 percent of overall teachers with less than five years of experience leave the profession.

“The Federal Government’s failure to implement an adequate workforce strategy has left a huge oversupply of teachers in some areas and shortages in others.

“Data provided by the Federal Education Department shows $34.65 million was spent by the Federal Government on the first five cohorts of Teach for Australia, yet only 124 graduates are still teaching in March this year – and only 37 remain in their original school.

“Disadvantaged schools need increased resources to close the gap, not expensive and ineffective programs like Teach for Australia.

“Once again the Turnbull Government is ignoring the evidence of what works in education and wasting taxpayers money. Senator Birmingham invested another $20 million in this program in December last year before the evaluation was completed.

“It is clear this program is not working. It is astounding that the Federal Government is choosing to fund this failing program at the same time as slashing the original Gonski needs-based funding agreements that were delivering targeted resources to our schools and making a difference to the lives of our students.

“This program is part of the Federal Government’s failing strategy on initial teacher education that has seen entry standards

plummet. The percentage of students entering courses with an ATAR of under 50 almost doubled between 2013 to 2016 from 7.3 percent to 14.3 percent.

“We need minimum entry standards for teacher education programs to ensure that every single entrant has a proven track record of academic achievement.

“It’s time for the Federal Government to focus on how to attract and retain students entering teaching courses, rather than directing taxpayer money into a program that is not getting results,” said Ms Haythorpe.

Media contact: Siobhan Lyttle 0481 751 579

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026