Union demands greater investment in leadership and teaching in schools by Turnbull Government

The Australian Education Union has demanded Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's full commitment to leadership and teaching in schools following its release today of a submission to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools.

'Principals need more time to lead, and teachers need more time to teach,' said Correna Haythorpe, Federal President of the Australian Education Union, today.

'That demands an end to unnecessary bureaucratic compliance, better initial teacher education, improved professional development, and more time for quality teaching and learning,' she said.

The AEU submission is based on an extensive survey of more than 4000 public school principals and teachers around Australia.

'Our dedicated public school teachers and principals need better support, the trust their professionalism deserves, and a central role in finding solutions to enhance student learning,' Haythorpe said.

The survey reveals that principals are currently able to invest just 14 per cent of their time leading teaching and learning due to competing demands not focused on the classroom. It also found:

- Many principals work crushing hours, with 90 per cent spending more than 46 hours on school-related activities, 19 per cent up to 55 hours, and 48 per cent more than 56 hours.
- 91 per cent believe they are using funds from other areas to help students with a disability who are ineligible for funding.
- 79 per cent say they do not have enough resources to meet the needs of students with a disability at their school.

'A high-performing school system also demands that new teachers enter the profession with the best possible preparation before they start teaching in the classroom,' Haythorpe said.

The AEU recommends teacher training should be transitioned to a two-year post-graduate qualification, such as an undergraduate degree combined with a two-year teaching masters.

Of surveyed public school teachers with less than four years' experience, just 13 per cent rated their initial teacher education as 'very good'.

Around 79 per cent said training to teach students with a disability was only 'of some help' or was not helpful'. Similar strong concern was raised around training for involving parents and guardians, managing students with behavioural needs, and ensuring consistent and comparable assessments.

'These alarming findings highlight the need for urgent action by the Turnbull Government to focus on initial teacher education, mentoring, and support for early-career teachers,' Haythorpe said.

'You can't build a high-performing school system without needs-based funding that ensures all schools are properly resourced to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and students have access to a broad curriculum taught by fully qualified teachers. An affiliate of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and Education International (EI)

'This review has been prevented from considering whether total funding is adequate to meet student need, when we know the Turnbull Government is cutting $17 billion from what schools were going to receive by 2027, and when we know that the funding of public schools will fall drastically short of 100 per cent of the SRS, even by 2023.

‘The current funding reality contradicts any claimed commitment to a high-performing school system – especially when the impact falls mainly on public schools that educate the strong majority of students, and an even greater majority of students with a background of disadvantage. If we’re talking about a schooling resource standard, only 100 per cent will do,’ Haythorpe concluded.

Submissions to the review closed on 2 November. The review will report in March 2018.

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