Ministers get it wrong on master's degree



The Australian Education Union has rejected the education ministers' announced feasibility study investigating a one-year education master's degree as an attack on the qualifications of the teaching profession.

Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the AEU would never accept a move that undermined Australia's teachers.

"It is less than a decade since education ministers agreed to a two-year master's degree, a move that was widely applauded as a measure that would enhance the qualifications of Australian teachers.

"We are at a loss to understand why education ministers would commission a study to shorten the time required to ensure teachers are fully prepared to enter the classroom.

"Put simply, this is bad policy," Ms Haythorpe said.

"This announcement has been made without any consultation with the teaching profession through the AEU. Any changes to teaching qualifications must be made in consultation with the profession it impacts.

"The National Teacher Workforce Shortage Action Plan, which was signed off by all states and territories and the Commonwealth, was developed in a consultative process and set out a clear agenda for addressing the workforce crisis. One-year master's degrees are not part of this plan.

"It is ironic that ministers committed to recommendations that were intended to alleviate workload and to attract and retain teachers and yet this decision will undermine the status and qualifications of the teaching profession.

"The workforce crisis will not be fixed by lowering the status and standards of our profession.

"The proposed feasibility study will have no credibility as it will be conducted by AITSL, the board of which excludes any representative from the teaching profession through the union. Once again, decisions made about the profession must only be made with the profession at the table.

"Any reduction in ITE will have an impact on classroom readiness for graduate teachers. You cannot compress two years of ITE into 12 months and expect graduates to bring the same skills and standards to the classroom.

"The AEU urges education ministers to refer back to the National Teacher Workforce Shortage Action Plan and instead of pushing policy that undermines qualifications and standards in ITE, it is time to invest in ITE and develop properly paid practical placements, and paid internships or studentships.

"As it stands, this announcement shows that education ministers have no interest in actually fixing the teacher shortage and are instead ducking their responsibility to fund ITE properly so that we have a fully trained and qualified teaching profession."

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