Commission proposal must have teachers at its core



The Australian Education Union (AEU) has welcomed a proposal by Education Minister Jason Clare for the establishment of a new Teaching and Learning Commission as an opportunity for a national discussion about how to strengthen the national education architecture for the teaching profession.

However, AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said any proposal to bring together the functions of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Australian Education Research Organisation and Education Services Australia under one national body must be considered in genuine consultation with the teaching profession, represented by their unions.

“The reality for teachers on the ground is that they are facing a recruitment and retention crisis, escalating workloads and increased complexity of student needs,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“The question we have is whether the national education architecture is fit for today’s teaching and learning needs.

“All education ministers across the country should be asking: how does the current architecture fit the actual needs of teachers, what is the teaching profession’s connection to these four bodies, and how do they support teachers to provide high quality teaching and learning for all students including those with high-level complex needs in the classroom?

“We welcome a national discussion facilitated by the Minister for Education...however we seek the formal commitment from government that the voices of teachers and unions will be central to the development of any proposals going forward, because it is teachers who deliver education every day in classrooms across the country.”

Ms Haythorpe said a significant piece that is missing from the current architecture is a teaching workforce arm.

“Any proposals for a new body must have a priority focus on the issues that are facing teachers every day in regard to recruitment and retention and decent working conditions,” she said.

“With a new proposed Commission, we need to be reassured that those matters are a priority for government.”

Ms Haythorpe said the proposal aligns with the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, released in February 2024, which has outlined a clear roadmap for transforming the teaching profession to meet the needs of the future.

Recommendation 5 states: "Governments should establish national commissions or other mechanisms, which should include relevant financial authorities, representatives of teachers' organizations and other relevant stakeholders, to assess and tackle shortages of adequately trained teachers. Such commissions or mechanisms should address labour market analyses, recruitment, teacher migration, attrition and retention, compensation, status and rights, workload and wellbeing, equity (including the ratio of qualified teachers to students), equality and infrastructure."

Ms Haythorpe said: "For teachers, a stronger framework must be backed with the resources, competitive wages and working conditions they need to do their jobs well. It is about giving teachers the respect they deserve and the tools they need to ensure every child gets the education they are entitled to."

"Teachers are calling for a public education system that values their expertise, reduces administrative burden and delivers the resources they need in the classroom. The AEU will engage constructively in this process to ensure that any proposed new Commission delivers for teachers, students and the future of public education in Australia."

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