



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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27 October 2009

Teacher Shortages Must Be Addressed

The Australian Education Union has called for a national approach to tackling teacher shortages after a new survey found almost 60 per cent of schools had trouble getting the teachers they needed.

In the survey of 1,473 public school principals across the nation, 59 per cent of principals reported problems with the supply of teachers in the past year and 57 per cent said the problem was getting worse.

Releasing the survey in Canberra, AEU Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos said schools faced a range of problems including major shortages of teachers qualified to teach key subjects, difficulties recruiting and retaining staff and a short pay scale that made it difficult to keep experienced teachers in the classroom.

"The survey found that because of the shortages, 59 per cent of secondary schools had teachers working outside their area of expertise," Mr Gavrielatos said.

"We need a long-term plan to address the chronic problems with the supply of teachers. It is not good enough to have unconnected initiatives that do not go to the fundamental issue of how we value and reward teachers.

"Australian teachers spend more hours in the classroom than those in almost any other major nation and yet they are paid below-average wages.

"To keep our most experienced teachers in schools they must be properly rewarded.

"We have had a record investment in new classrooms and facilities. Now it is time to invest in teachers and end the under-funding of public schools so we can maximise the benefits of these facilities and give every child the individual attention they deserve."

The survey also found:

- Principals said the top priority for the Rudd Government should be investing more in teachers (30 per cent) followed by increasing teacher numbers (22 per cent).
- Schools are relying on fund-raising to pay for the basics. Almost 90 per cent of principals said fundraising was important for their school with the number one use of the money being to pay for library resources and textbooks (57 per cent).
- Student class sizes are still too high with 80 per cent of students being taught in classes with 20 or more students and 32 per cent in classes of 26 or more.

NB: A copy of the survey is available at www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2009/SOSreport.pdf

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