

REVEALING NEW OECD FIGURES

Workloads 'at breaking point'

DESPITE the attrition crisis, teacher workload in Australia has increased significantly since 2013, new figures released by the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 have revealed.

Working hours for Australian lower secondary teachers increased by two hours per week in the five years between surveys.

This was the equal third largest increase in the OECD behind Chile (9hrs) and Iceland (4hrs). The average increase across the OECD was 0.5 hours. In contrast to Australia, teachers' workload fell in ten OECD countries, most notably in Portugal (-5.1 hours) and Korea (-3 hours).

Lower secondary school teachers in Australia now have a much longer working week than the average across OECD countries - 45 hours per week compared with 39.

AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe said the findings confirm what teachers are saying.

"Sadly, the spike in teacher working hours is no surprise. Despite our warnings, the amount of extra work required of teachers after-school and on weekends mean that teacher workloads have been steadily growing year after year," she told *Australian Teacher Magazine*.

"The advent of ever-increasing administration and reporting requirements is compounding the

problem. An AEU Victoria workload study revealed that more than a third of teachers in all schools have indicated that their workload often or nearly always adversely affected their health. This is frankly unacceptable and unsustainable."

AEU Victoria president Meredith Peace said workloads were at "breaking point".

"...Teachers do a fantastic job in hard circumstances, but workloads are not sustainable. We won't be able to support student learning and each student's individual needs properly until our students are funded at least to the minimum resource standard."

The report found that Australian lower secondary teachers spend 19.9 hours per week in actual teaching. Teachers in Chile, US and Canada spend 28.5, 28.1 and 27.2 hours respectively engaged in teaching.

Australian teachers also clocked up the third highest number of hours spent on management and administration tasks in the OECD (6.5 hours per week), compared to an average of 4.1 hours in OECD countries. In Finland, teachers spend just 1.4 hours on these tasks.

Only teachers in Japan (8.4) and Korea (7.1) spend longer hours on management and administration.

Cheryl Brennan, president of the



Australian Professional Teachers' Association, also weighed in on the findings.

"The expectation to raise Australian student results compared to other countries is difficult when teachers are expected to do more with the same time allocation..." she said.

According to Haythorpe, Australian teachers are working longer hours for two main reasons - Commonwealth funding cutbacks and an "ever-increasing burden of teaching workloads".

"On top of a complex curriculum and hours of marking and lesson preparation at nights and on weekends, teachers are burdened

with skyrocketing administration requirements, increasing reporting requirements, and demands to focus on coaching students for standardised testing such as NAPLAN. None of these demands contribute to real student achievement..." she noted.

Haythorpe said it wasn't necessary to look overseas for answers.

"We already know what the issues are, and we know how to fix them. Our goal is to reduce the burden on overworked teachers and achieve real improvements in working conditions.

"Governments need to take teacher workloads seriously. Something needs to change," she said.

AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe says "Despite our warnings, the amount of extra work required of teachers after-school and on weekends mean that teacher workloads have been steadily growing..."

JUST BRIEFLY

Merger raising fears

SHEPPARTON, August 14 - Families in regional Victoria are worried about student welfare as the State Government pushes ahead with its plan to merge four high schools into one, *ABC News* reports. The Shepparton Education Plan was introduced by the State Government to boost poor education outcomes.

Article slams inequity

CANBERRA, August 13 - An *ABC News* investigative article indicates that public schools are being ignored by the government when it comes to capital funding for new facilities and renovations. Between 2013 and 2017, Australia's four richest elite private schools spent more on new facilities and renovations than 1800 schools combined.

Experts' vision findings

SYDNEY, August 12 - Two experts agree that students with a vision impairment should be held to the same standards as sighted students. Dr Melissa Cain and Melissa Fanshawe have found vision impairment is a low-incidence disability which means many teachers are unaware of how to cater for these children.