

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1
Output Group: 1.3

DEST Question No. E432_04

Question:

The committee makes several references to the need to replace the large numbers of teachers who are expected to retire soon:

e.g. the *Background data and analysis* report on page 74 states:

Over the next few years, Australia will face increasing shortages of teachers due to age-based retirements... shortages of possibly up to 20,000 to 30,000 teachers are estimated later in the decade (MCEETYA 2003).

Does the Department agree with this advice?
If you agree, what strategies will the Commonwealth be adopting?

And can the Department explain the evidence behind the Minister's claims that there are no looming shortages?
If you do not agree, please explain why and on what data?

Answer:

Teacher Supply

The Department, in cooperation with a Working Group comprised of representatives of State and Territory education departments, and non-government education authorities, coordinates and compiles the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia* report. This analysis is therefore agreed by the Australian Government and all other jurisdictions. We would, however, point to the complete quotation, including the qualifier:

"The extent of the shortfall will depend on the success of policy initiatives to attract and retain teachers, and other factors such as changes to policy settings affecting student-teacher ratios and general employment conditions in the wider economy. Depending on these factors, shortages of possibly up to 20,000 to 30,000 teachers are estimated later in the decade..."

Employment of teachers remains the responsibility of the States and Territories, but strategies to be adopted by the Australian Government include:

- Consideration of recommendations of the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education;
- Continued work for the MCEETYA Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce (TQELT) on teacher supply and demand, including research on strategies adopted in other English-speaking countries, and analysis of data on reasons teachers leave. A recent UK survey revealed that the five main factors found to influence teachers' decisions to leave were workload, new challenge, the school situation, salary and personal circumstances. Of these, workload was by far the most important, and salary the least.

The previous MCEETYA *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia* report published in 2001, found the national teaching labour market was broadly in balance. As at 2001 - 02, the national labour market for teachers remained broadly in balance. However, there appeared to be difficulties in some locations, and in a number of teaching specialisations. The specialisations where recruitment difficulties were experienced included mathematics and science (especially physics and chemistry), and languages other than English (LOTE) and the industrial arts.

The data available suggest that in the period ahead (post 2004) Australia is likely to face increasing shortages of teachers due to age-based retirement. The extent of the shortfall will depend on the success of policy initiatives to attract and retain teachers.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) National Skills Shortage List – February 2003 – confirms these findings by indicating shortages in the Secondary teaching specialisations of Manual Arts/Technical Studies, Mathematics, Physics/Chemistry and General Science, with recruitment difficulties increasing in the specialisations of LOTE and Technology.