

# Practical ideas to address Australia's teacher shortage

Everyone agrees that the education of our kids is of vital importance to our country and society. Good teachers inspire and change lives. Yet, we have a national teachers' shortage.

Our universities graduate around 16,000 new teachers each year, but Australia needs at least 4,000 extra teachers to keep up with growth in the number of school students. And as more teachers retire in the second half of the decade, the problem gets bigger.

Over the past 10 years we've seen a decline in the number of people who want to train as teachers. We've also seen an increase in the number of teachers leaving the profession early.

We need to work on ways to attract more people to the profession and keep them there.

The attractiveness of teaching as a career and the ability to retain teachers in the profession is affected by a range of factors ranging from career prospects to the salaries we pay our teachers, from working conditions to administrative burden.

## We need solutions that address:

- the status of the teaching profession
- remuneration
- preparedness of new teachers and what can be reasonably expected of them early in their career
- professional development and workplace support
- career progression and pathways
- teachers' workloads
- support for teachers in schools, and
- financial barriers faced by mid-career professionals retraining as teachers.

We need a national effort to solve the problem of teacher shortages. The solutions will need the collaboration and effort of everyone – the federal government, state and territory governments, the independent and Catholic school sectors, teachers and principals, universities and unions.

The following proposals go some way to alleviating the barriers to attracting and retaining people to the teaching profession including the sensible, practical things that universities can do to play their part.





## Expand programs that combine learning with work experience to better develop teachers

**How it will help:** students will benefit from a better mix of learning at university and in the workplace. Students will get more exposure to the classroom and develop practical skills in the workplace together with quality mentoring and coaching. Pre-service teachers will be more productive sooner and will contribute to addressing workforce shortages, including by taking on ancillary tasks and freeing up teachers to teach.

**What's needed to make it happen:** universities and employers need to collaborate to develop programs and set up longer placements. Federal, state and territory governments can support this engagement.

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## Create a degree apprenticeship system

Create a degree apprenticeship system where student teachers do more of their training in schools and, like any other form of degree apprenticeship system, get a job at the end of it.

**How it will help:** an approach to teacher education that combines theory and practice in a new way and links education directly to the workforce. Degree apprenticeship systems offer schools qualified new teachers and offer students and graduates a pathway to a job. They would be set up under contracts which would set out the responsibilities of employers, students and universities and which would drive quality assurance and improvement.

**What's needed to make it happen:** closer collaboration between universities and employers and resourcing by employers and governments. Some changes in teacher registration and professional standards will also be needed.

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## Extend FEE-HELP to support students undertaking short courses and microcredentials

**How it will help:** will support the professional development of existing teachers and those mid-career looking to transition to teaching.

**What's needed to make it happen:** amend the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* to make FEE-HELP available to students studying microcredentials.

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## Adopt and scale-up programs that combine study and paid employment

Adopt and scale-up nationally postgraduate programs that combine university study and paid employment – particularly in areas of acute teacher shortages – for post-graduate students.

**How it will help:** postgraduate students will get more practical experience in the classroom. Payment (internships and/or employment in para-professional roles) will reduce the cost to students – including career changers – of doing a teaching qualification.

**What's needed to make it happen:** closer collaboration between universities and employers and resourcing by employers and governments.



## Develop a national recruitment portal

Develop a national recruitment portal to link new graduates to vacancies in schools across the country.

**How it will help:** a national portal will make it easier for employers and graduates to identify opportunities and to fill jobs.

**What's needed to make it happen:** the Federal Department of Education could set up a portal in collaboration with state and territory governments and Catholic and independent school sectors to share information more effectively across the nation.

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## Look at different employment models for teachers

Examine options for different forms of employment that offer flexibility to schools but also provide employment stability for new teacher graduates.

**How it will help:** lessen graduate teachers' reliance on short-term work to help retain them in the profession.

**What's needed to make it happen:** state and territory governments and other employers need to consider their employment practices. Changes may be needed in teacher registration and professional standards.





### Develop stronger partnerships

Develop and reward stronger partnerships and engagement between universities, schools and federal and state education departments.

**How it will help:** stronger partnerships will support increased collaboration to bring teacher education and the workplace closer together and develop innovative and effective programs.

**What's needed to make it happen:** drive engagement and collaboration through the Ministerial Council and its engagement with stakeholders in both university and school sectors.

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