

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Upskill teachers to fill staffing shortages, survey suggests

**20 October 2014:** Around 40 per cent of secondary school principals and 20 per cent of Australia's primary school principals report having either major or moderate difficulty in suitably filling staff vacancies, findings from Australia's national teaching workforce survey reveal.

In 2013, between May and August, 15 475 school teachers and 1579 school leaders completed the Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) survey about their background and qualifications, work, career intentions and school staffing issues. The findings of the survey, conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Education, were released today.

According to ACER Research Fellow and co-author of the survey report, Dr Paul Weldon, "Teacher shortages can be hard to measure because schools use a variety of strategies to ensure that classes are not left without a teacher, including reducing the curriculum on offer, employing less qualified teachers, or increasing class sizes."

The most common method for dealing with staffing shortages is requiring teachers to teach outside their field of experience, reported by 33 per cent of secondary principals and 12 per cent of primary principals.

Dr Weldon said that since smaller proportions of secondary teachers have received training in teaching methodology in individual curriculum areas than have studied the subject at tertiary level, one possible strategy for dealing with teacher shortages at the secondary level may lie in developing their teaching methodology skills that are specific to the areas concerned. For example, while 16 per cent of secondary teachers report some tertiary study in computing, only eight per cent indicate that they have been trained in teaching methodology in computing.

"In computing and other subject areas, it may be possible to improve the capacity of teachers to teach in shortage areas by encouraging more teachers who have undertaken tertiary study in such areas to undertake training in teaching methodology in the relevant subject," Dr Weldon said.

This was the third administration of the SiAS survey following surveys in 2007 and 2010, allowing trends over time to be measured. The information collected provides a detailed picture of the Australian teacher workforce, to assist jurisdictions in their workforce planning and inform important workforce issues such as teacher career and retirement intentions, and current teacher labour markets.

"Australia's ageing teacher workforce suggests that large numbers of teachers will need to be recruited in the next few years to replace teachers who retire, and to service projected growth in student numbers," Dr Weldon said.

SiAS is supported by an Advisory Committee that included representatives from government and non-government education authorities, teacher educators, principals' associations and teacher unions.

The project's findings are presented in two reports: *Staff in Australia's Schools 2013: Main Report on the Survey* and *Profiles of Teachers in Selected Curriculum Areas*. Both reports are available from the Commonwealth Department of Education website < <https://www.education.gov.au/school-teacher-workforce-data-reports> >

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