Temporary teachers and EB9

Did you know that 14 per cent of teachers in Queensland state schools are employed on a temporary or casual basis? And that in recent QTU member surveys, job security has come in as either the major issue or as the second major issue for members, following workload?

For this reason, the QTU claim is focusing on doing something to increase the level of permanent employment across the state.

What’s the impact of temporary employment?

Under the current system, temporary teachers can be contracted continuously for anywhere up to three years across numerous schools before being offered a permanent, secure job with the department. In many cases this leads to:

- ineligibility for pay over vacation periods
- broken service, which impacts on salary progression as well as access to senior teacher, experienced senior teacher, HAT and LT classifications, parental leave and superannuation
- limited professional development opportunities
- no access to promotion
- an extra-difficult start to teaching for new educators

Evidence shows that employees who believe that their employment is insecure are often more dissatisfied with their job. This can be attributed to temporary workers having less autonomy in their roles and having less of an influence on decisions made in their workplace.

What’s in the claim?

In this EB, the QTU is seeking maximisation of permanency including:

- access to permanent employment no later than after two years on temporary engagements
- limiting temporary positions within schools, so that they only exist in circumstances of a short-term vacancy, whether the school is IPS or not.
- improvements to the transfer and relocation system so that members do not feel the need to relinquish or resign to work in a “preferred” location
- a process to ensure temporary teachers are accessing the mentoring for beginning teachers program and other professional development
- the extension of the exit summary observation report.

Class sizes and EB9

With workload one of the key priorities of EB9, it is important to consider all aspects that impact on it.

For successive EBs, the QTU has argued that class sizes impact on the working and learning conditions of teachers and students and the workload of teachers. Class sizes can also represent a workplace health and safety (WHS) issue, depending on the number of students, the size of the
classroom, the access to learning spaces and the behaviour and abilities of the students that are taught.

**History of class sizes**

The QTU has a proud history of campaigning for improved class sizes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Class size (targets)</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>50 - 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>&gt;40 in most classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Threats of strike action moved these decisions along to drop class sizes with a promise from government to reduce targets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1979 | Recommended but not adopted  
Yrs 1-3 = 1:25  
Yrs 4-10 = 1:30  
Yrs 11-12 = 1:25 | Ahern Select Parliamentary Report recommended |
| 2003 | Reduced from 30 to 28 for Years 4 – 10 (middle schooling) phased in. | |
| 2007 | P-3 - 25  
4-10 – 28  
11-12 – 25 | Fully implemented by Feb 2007 as a result of 2003 EB  
COSTINGS = $38 million by Beattie Government to reduce class sizes |
| 2012 | Newman government sought to remove class sizes from certified agreement and therefore change their status from a working condition to policy | QTU retained class sizes in agreement  
Threats of strike action |
| 2016 | Inclusion of class size target for composite classes  
Inclusion of reference to class sizes in excess of class size target in exceptional circumstances and following consultation | |

However, the current class size provision does not go far enough in providing clarity with respect to class sizes for practical subjects, the need to adjust class sizes based on the complex learning needs of students in the class (eg ILP, inclusion, low SES, rural and remote settings), instrumental music and special education settings.

We are constantly told by educational research that the key factor to success in student learning is the quality of teaching that occurs in the classroom. Research has confirmed that where class
size decreases, the individualised attention students receive from the teacher increases, as does their engagement.

Additionally, research also links smaller class sizes to increased opportunities for teachers to monitor student learning and provide individualised teaching suited to a student’s individual ability.

We need a formalisation of processes to review class sizes in complex settings, to avoid negative impact on teacher workload, student and teacher wellbeing, and student outcomes.

There is also a need to review class sizes in year ten as Queensland transitions to the new system of senior assessment and tertiary entrance.

What’s in the claim?

- A formalisation of processes to review class sizes that may exceed class size targets, including:
  - recognition of the potential of class sizes in excess of class size targets to impact on teacher workload, student and teacher wellbeing, and student outcomes
  - a formal process for determining class sizes in special education settings
  - a review and establishment of class size targets for practical subjects
  - recognition of year ten as the foundation year of senior secondary and an adjustment in class size to reflect this change.
- Schools with a low index of community socio-educational advantage and rural and remote schools to have a decreased class size target to help manage the complexities of these settings.
- Class sizes for instrumental music teachers/instructors specifically addressing combinations of different instruments.
- Supervision arrangements for instrumental music teachers/instructors to be revised for large ensemble rehearsals over 28.

Throughout the campaign and negotiations, QTU members’ workload will be a key element. Reports about the progress of negotiations will include updates on the government’s response to member workload issues, including to the QTU’s claim about class sizes and temporary teachers. These responses will also be considered by members regarding any offers made by the government as we progress toward the end of negotiations and a replacement agreement.