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Paid practicums crucial for future of teaching profession

The union representing staff in Queensland and Northern Territory non-government schools has endorsed the Federal Government's Universities Accord Final Report recommendation to reduce financial pressure on teaching students by introducing paid practicums.

The review backs long-running calls from unions and academics for students to be compensated for compulsory placements that currently lead to high dropout rates and financial stress.

Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) Branch Secretary Terry Burke said the change was overdue.

"In a sector currently facing an attrition crisis, many potential teachers are deterred from the profession due to the reality of undertaking months of unpaid work," Mr Burke said.

"Providing financial support for student teachers is crucial to ensure the future of the teaching profession, particularly during a cost-of-living crisis.

"Practicums consist of many many hours of commitment and take students away from the part-time jobs required to support themselves.

"No one should have to fall into poverty because of mandatory university requirements.

"Unpaid practicums are also an equity issue that excludes lower-income students from the profession," he said.

Mr Burke said the IEU-QNT supported the recommendation that the government provide financial support for fields such as teaching, a key industry.

"It's vital student teachers have hands-on experience in a classroom to ensure they are prepared when they graduate.

"Placement poverty results in poor early experiences in the workplace and negative perceptions of teaching – the opposite of what is needed in a sector with a longstanding skills shortage.

"The government must acknowledge this and provide adequate funding to ensure we have a new generation of enthusiastic and well-prepared teachers," Mr Burke said.

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Contact: Katie Fotheringham, IEU-QNT Communications Manager: kfotheringham@ieuqnt.org.au / 0409 628 675