

# Vote No to the Proposed Agreement 2017



By Steven Adams

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## **Part 1 About the Author and overview.**

I started teaching as a Mathematics teacher in 2004 and joined the AEU the same year. In 2005 I moved to Hallam Senior College where I have been for the last 13 years. During most of that time I have been on Consultation Committee and/or part of the sub-branch executive. I have spent two separate stints on AEU Branch Council one from 2010-12 and other from 2016 to present.

I have previously advocated against the last two agreements. Even someone who is as critical as me has to admit that the proposed agreement has a number of gains across a number of areas. For the sake of time I will let the AEU leadership outline these and instead focus on the side of the argument that they won't focus on.

In every vote like we will be expected to do, voters need to make an informed decision. What this means is that both sides of the argument need to be considered before we can truly make an informed vote. I hope that this document will be even valuable to those who end up voting 'Yes' to give a bit of background to why people like myself will be voting 'No'.

My belief is that a strong Union vigorously debates issues and then stands together. The intention of this document is not to create division within the AEU but to inform debate. I believe strongly that people should be aware and informed of the issues surrounding teaching, however, I understand that this is difficult. After most teachers have spent 53 hours on work related activities the last thing that they want to do is read and analyse legal and statistical documents. This is essentially what we pay the AEU leadership for.

In this document I will reference various agreements (ie VGSA2001, VGSA2004, VGSA2008, VGSA2013, VGSA2017). VGSA means Victorian Governments Schools Agreement and the number after it was the year that the agreement was reached. I also make reference to Productivity Commission reports and Teacher Supply and Demand Reports. The latter is released by the Victorian Government. All these documents have been publically available at some stage, but if you require a particular document just let me know via email and I will send it to you. I won't begrudge anyone who wants to do their own fact checking as I am certainly not beyond scrutiny.

Last time that I created a document like this the feedback was in general quite positive and I thanked people who help me correct small errors. However, I was disappointed that there was an anonymous document that circulated opposing my analysis. It wasn't that there was opposition, but the fact the author of this document didn't have the courage of their convictions to put their name to it.

I want to apologise to ES and Principals because this document is mainly focussed on teachers but I hope that it will still be valuable enough. I apologise for the rushed nature of this document but I have tried to balance getting the information out there as soon as possible with getting an in depth analysis.

I would like to thank you for spending your 54<sup>th</sup> hour of your work week to spend the time to read this.

Steven Adams  
Hallam Senior College

## **Part 2: How will our workload will change?**

Teacher work is generally defined in terms of Face-to-Face teaching, Class Sizes and number of meetings. There is far more to it, but these are usually our key focus in industrial campaigns. In our Log of Claims, we wanted improvements in all of these areas and this was central to our campaign. The ACER workload survey said that teachers were doing 53 hours a week, which is 15 hours of unpaid over-time. Only a seismic shift would be able to change this.

### **Face-to-Face teaching**

In our Log of Claims, we wanted Face-to-Face teaching reduced to 18 hours for both primary and secondary which is currently 22.5 and 20 hours respectively. The VGSA2017 has no change to our Face-to-Face teaching.

### **Class Sizes**

In our log of Claims, we wanted class sizes to be 20 for primary and secondary and 18 for practical classes. There is no change to class sizes in the VGSA2017. There is a clause which states that practical class sizes "should be determined having regard to available facilities" 25(4)(d). This may be used in some cases to reduce class sizes for some teachers, but for the vast majority of teachers it will be business as usual.

### **Meetings**

The agreement has always said up to two hours of meetings but in many schools there was debate about the hour of additional duties. The VGSA2017 does make it more clear that you can only attend up to 2 hours of meetings. I do welcome the stronger wording but this is more about entrenching an existing condition than a new gain.

### **4 Professional Practise Days - Clause 22(12)**

The AEU leadership said that the Government wouldn't budge on the Face-to-Face teaching and so looked for alternatives. The alternative that the government proposed for VGSA2017 was having 4 Professional Practise Days. The idea is that you would be taken off classes and assigned duties for the day so that you can prepare for your classes. It is a noble idea but doesn't seem to reflect understanding of teacher work.

For the 4 days that you are free from assigned duties, you have to leave meaningful work and the reality that students never work as well when you aren't there means anyway. The reality is that the 4 days is really less than 4 days any way. The maximum face-to-face teaching load is 20 hours for a week and so 4 days off teaching theoretically reduces your teaching load by 16 hours. Given that there are 40 weeks in a school year this averages out to 24 minutes a week. This is basically a best case scenario. As ultimately if you can't reach agreement about when the Profession Practise Days are, it is the principal who decides. Given how tight school budgets are could you blame them if they choose the days when you have the lightest load?

I also have concerns that the workload in getting this time off might ultimately be worse than not having it at all. The Daily Organiser at a decent size school with 75 staff will have to find cover for 300 separate teaching days on top of all the other school activities that need to be covered.

The real kicker about this whole thing is that it is temporary and not systematic change anyway. This clause doesn't come into effect until 2018 and has a sunset clause

set for 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021. This means that in 2021 if we want this change then we are going to have to argue for it again.

### **30 hours' model or the 30/8 Split in work - Clause 22(8)**

On paper we work a 38-hour week and from a technical point of view this is all we have to work in a week. In reality the average teachers work 53 hours. A solution was to split the 38-hour week into a 30 hours' section and an 8 hours' section. In the 30 hours this includes our "Face-to-Face teaching time, planning, preparation, assessment of student learning, collaboration, professional development, and peer observation including feedback and reflection) with the remaining 8 hours available for other activities (such as yard duty, meetings, other duties and lunch)".

If you don't understand how this will reduce your workload, then you are not alone. This clause doesn't mean that things are getting taken out and I don't understand how splitting my work day reduces my load.

### **More peer observation!**

The VGSA2017 will be the known among many other things as the one that imbedded peer observation into our workload. The VGSA2013 never mentions Peer Observation and our Log of Claims mentions Peer Observation just the once and this was to expressly say that teachers couldn't been forced by the principal to do it. If you don't like peer observation, then too bad. One of the Commitments of this agreement is "Collaboration, peer observation including feedback and reflection, and coaching as key elements of professional learning". **Clause 10** It also part of the long term planning document **Clause 12(5)(a)** and as mentioned above it is part of the 30 hours.

Peer observation is now an integral part of your work. I not going to argue the merits for or against Peer Observation as a concept but merely point out this is another addition to our workload.

### **Conclusion**

There is no reduction in Face-to-face teaching, no reduction in class sizes and effectively no reduction in meetings. Our week is being split into 30 hours and 8 hours but it is not clear how this will reduce workload. The 4 Professional Days will deliver at best an average of 24 minutes' reduction in workload a week and before it ceases to exist as a condition in April 2021. Increase emphasis in Peer Observation may erode the slim reductions and may even increase our workload. What is in the VGSA2017 is nothing like we wanted in our Log of Claims.

### Part 3: How much are the pay rises?

Last agreement everyone was confused by the official percentage pay rise that the AEU leadership put out. This was because they put in a pay rise that was in the last agreement, included the incremental structure and failed to grasp certain mathematical concepts. To be fair some of these mathematical concepts are difficult, but it is important that negotiators are able to crunch the numbers effectively or get help. I vigorously disagreed with their figures and others likewise complained.

This time their figures include just what the percentage increase is across the board without allowing for people incrementing. This is a far more logical and simple way of doing things and much clearer.

For teachers the pay rises are as follows.

1 April 2017	3.25%
1 April 2018	1.50%
1 Oct 2018	1.75%
1 April 2019	1.50%
1 Oct 2019	1.75%
1 April 2020	1.50%
1 Oct 2020	1.75%

The claim is that this is 13.7% increase and I am happy to say when you allow for the compounding nature of the increases this is exactly correct. What I disagree with is the claim that this is an increase of 3.25% each year. It is correct that there is a 3.25% increase in 2017, 2018<sup>1</sup>, 2019 and 2020 but the problem is that this is not a 4 year agreement.

It is correct from now until the agreement expires in 30 April 2021 is 4 years away but I believe that it is correct to look at pay rises from the end of the previous agreement to the end of the proposed agreement. From 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 2016 until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021 is 4.5 years. If you redo the calculation you end up with 2.9% p.a. This I agree is above inflation, current wage growth and on par with what other states get. So what is my problem?

#### **Incrementing teachers miss out again!**

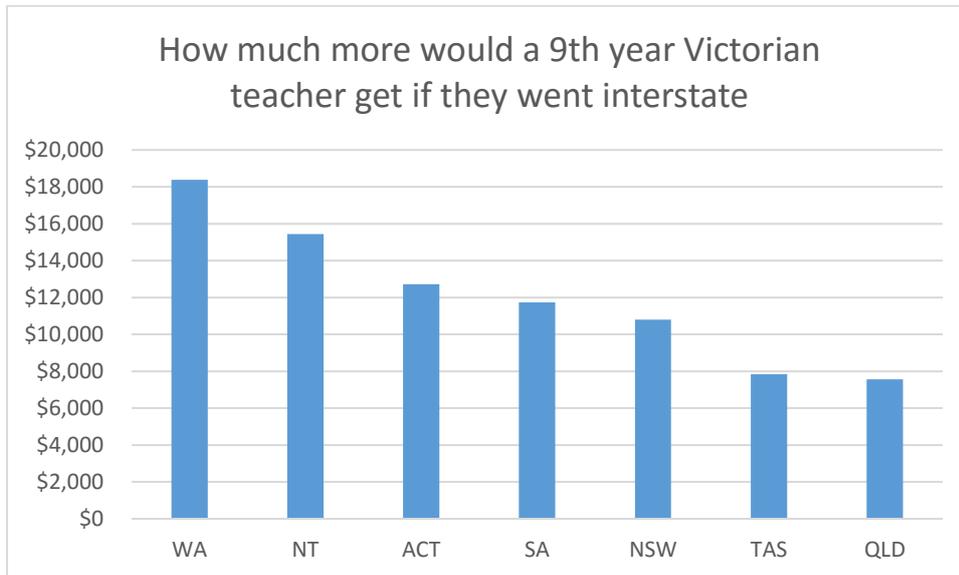
In Victoria it takes two more years to reach the top of the scale than any other state or territory. This might not seem like a big deal but it is. What I am saying is that a teacher in their 9<sup>th</sup> year of teaching in Victoria is currently on \$84 661 but if they move interstate they will go to the top of the scale in any other State or Territory. What this will result in is a massive pay rise as seen in the table and graph below.

WA	\$18,389
NT	\$15,443
ACT	\$12,713
SA	\$11,735
NSW	\$10,805

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<sup>1</sup> Technically a 1.5% increase and then a 1.75% increase on top of that is not a 3.25% increase and is 3.28% increase.

TAS	\$7,835
QLD	\$7,565



But it is not just 9<sup>th</sup> year out teachers that are underpaid compared to their interstate colleagues. Below is a table of the position that we sit in each increment currently.<sup>2</sup>

1st Year	2nd Last
2nd Year	2nd Last
3rd Year	Last
4th Year	Last
5th Year	Last
6th Year	Last
7th Year	Last
8th Year	Last
9th Year	Last
10th Year	Last
Top of the Scale	3rd Last

Our 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year teachers are currently only get paid better than Tasmanian teachers and our top of the scale teachers will only be getting better pay than Queensland and Tasmanian teachers. All of our other incrementing teachers are getting the lowest pay out of every state and territory.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/our-work/industrial> This link will direct you to the page where you can find the National Wide Pay. It is updated periodically. Each list is a bit different in how they place the information. What you look for is the 4YT because this is where a teacher with 4 years of training would start. If you have 4 years of training you start on the first bold value. It appears that some states still allow 3 year trained teachers to teach provided that they start at a lower salary. It is confusing but if you need help reading it just let me know.

The pay rises that are outlined in the agreement will not solve the endemic problems in the structure. Teachers incrementing will still be spending a number of years being the lowest paid teachers in Australia. In the tables below I compare the teacher wages between South Australia<sup>3</sup> and Victoria. You will see that each Victorian teachers fall behind South Australian teachers by more every year until their 9<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. In the 9<sup>th</sup> year is when a South Australian teacher will have reached the top of the scale. Victorian teachers then spend the next two years finally catching up.

The tables below will show how the discrepancy opens up.

**Pay rates after Victoria's 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 pay rise**

	SA	VIC	
1st Year	\$66,464	\$65,415	-\$1,049
2nd Year	\$69,891	\$67,829	-\$2,062
3rd Year	\$73,320	\$70,332	-\$2,988
4th Year	\$76,745	\$72,927	-\$3,818
5th Year	\$80,182	\$75,618	-\$4,564
6th Year	\$83,609	\$78,408	-\$5,201
7th Year	\$87,037	\$81,301	-\$5,736
8th Year	\$91,674	\$84,302	-\$7,372
9th Year	\$96,396	\$87,412	-\$8,984
10th Year	\$96,396	\$90,638	-\$5,758
Top of the Scale	\$96,396	\$98,047	\$1,651

**Pay rates by the end of 2017**

	SA	VIC	
	\$68,126	\$65,415	-\$2,711
	\$71,638	\$67,829	-\$3,809
	\$75,153	\$70,332	-\$4,821
	\$78,664	\$72,927	-\$5,737
	\$82,187	\$75,618	-\$6,569
	\$85,699	\$78,408	-\$7,291
	\$89,213	\$81,301	-\$7,912
	\$93,965	\$84,302	-\$9,663
	\$98,806	\$87,412	-\$11,394
	\$98,806	\$90,638	-\$8,168
	\$98,806	\$98,047	-\$759

<b>Total</b>	<b>-\$45,881</b>
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<b>Total</b>	<b>-\$68,834</b>
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I could have done this comparison with any other State or Territory and ended up with similar results. While Victorian teachers have more increments this will mean that any teacher incrementing up the scale will lose out significantly compared with our interstate colleague. This problem was identified known back in 2004 and although things have been tweaked as you can see this is a massive problem.

### **Is it really this bad?**

Actually things are worse and there are two factors that I not allowing in my calculations. In Victoria we have a common increment date which delay incremental rises by 3 months every year. Yes, teachers going from their first to their second year get compensation but every increment after that you are losing out.

Back in 2008 an increment stuff up meant that a 5<sup>th</sup> year out teacher like myself was put on 3<sup>rd</sup> year out salary. This happened to thousands of teachers already in the system but not to those who started after. Most of the teachers who were adversely affected by this error have now reached the top of the scale and this saga has become a historical footnote. However, it would be remiss to say that people still aren't affected. If you started before 2008 and haven't reached the top of the scale

<sup>3</sup> Usually I would compare with NSW but their 2017 pay rises weren't available at the time of writing and so chose South Australia instead.

there is a good chance that this stuff up will be affecting you right now. This Agreement doesn't do anything to rectify this situation.

### **Conclusion**

Since I have been teaching each agreement has claimed good gains in pay. Yet at the end of each agreement, Victorian Teachers find themselves at the bottom or towards the bottom when compared with interstate colleagues. This is because the Pay is never as good as what the AEU leadership suggests.

This is a dud deal for incrementing teachers, just like back in 2004, 2008 and 2013. This isn't right and I feel sorry for incrementing teachers and I am sorry that I am yet to get traction with this issue, even though I have arguing about it for over a decade.

#### Part 4: Funding

Are you feeling like you are working harder than you ever had? It's probably because of the lack of funding. Northern Territory has amongst the largest funding per student in Australia and it can be easier argued that this is because they have a large number of remote and disadvantaged students. What is not so clear is why similar states like NSW and SA fund their students at a much higher level than Victoria. Currently NSW and SA fund their students at \$2401<sup>4</sup> and \$1899 higher than Victoria.

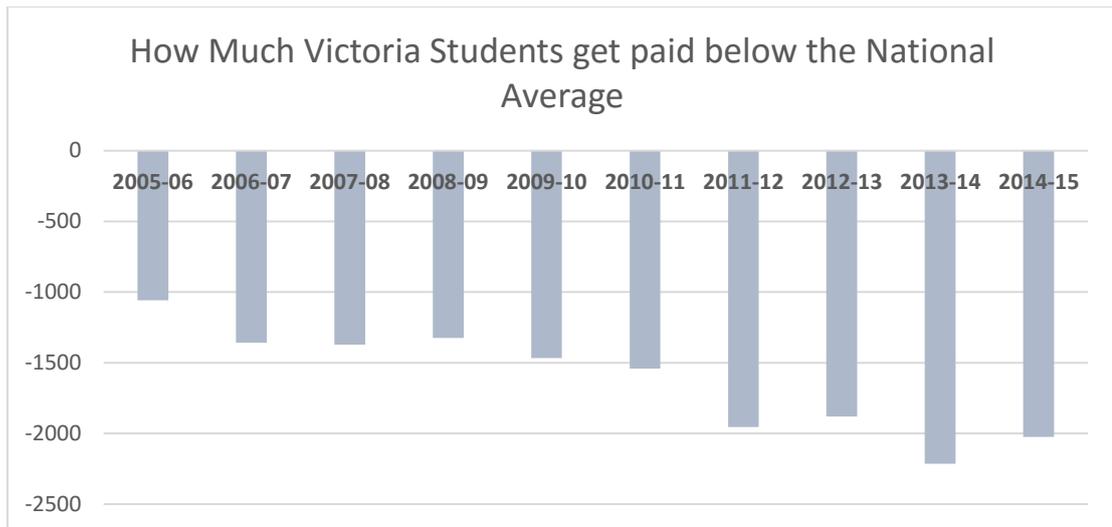
This means that Victorian Teachers, Principals and ES are trying to run their schools with less money. What this means is less resources and less support. The only way to do more with less is simply to work harder and this is why we are working on average of 53 hours per week.

In 2015 there were 575 481 student in Victoria each of these received \$2401 less than students in NSW. This amounts to an incredible \$1 381 729 881. It would take staggering \$1.4 billion each year to fund Victorian schools like NSW schools. The incredible thing is that it keeps on getting worse. The figures below are from the Productivity Commission and they have taken out any inflationary component. This means that the figures from 2014-15 are directly comparable with 2005-06. What we notice is that not only are we funded below the national average but year on year we are falling further behind.

	Vic	Aus Average	Difference
2014-15	\$12,413	\$14,439	-\$2,026
2013-14	\$12,046	\$14,260	-\$2,214
2012-13	\$12,233	\$14,113	-\$1,880
2011-12	\$12,381	\$14,337	-\$1,956
2010-11	\$12,575	\$14,118	-\$1,542
2009-10	\$12,861	\$14,327	-\$1,467
2008-09	\$12,491	\$13,816	-\$1,325
2007-08	\$12,390	\$13,762	-\$1,372
2006-07	\$12,074	\$13,433	-\$1,360
2005-06	\$12,137	\$13,194	-\$1,057

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<sup>4</sup> The productivity commission release a report every year about how much money each state spends on education and vast array of other information. The facts from this chapter are taken and/or derived from this report. The most recent information is for the 2014/15 financial year.



### **Isn't this what the Gonski Campaign about?**

The short answer is not really. When Federal Labor first starting to deliver Gonski funds they didn't want the State's to deliver less and so implemented funding agreements for them to chip in a bit as well. I guess the key to understand is that the Gonski campaign is about Federal Funding and although sometimes state funding is mentioned it is really a federal issue.

The Federal Government gives Public School students a similar amount of funding regardless of which State they live. To give you an idea excluding grants the Federal Government gives Public School students \$2199 compared with the national average of \$2231. If hypothetically Gonski funding delivered \$1000 per student this certainly be welcome, however, we would still be funded less than \$2401 than our NSW counterparts. If all States and Territories receive an extra \$1000 per student than the average still goes up by \$1000 and we are still behind by the same amount.

I don't want to dismiss the Gonski campaign and I have been supporting since its inception but for Victoria it is not our main game. If we get Gonski Funding for Victoria from the Federal Government it will deliver \$950 million<sup>5</sup> in 2018 and 2019, on the other hand if we get an extra \$2401 per student to be level with NSW this would mean an extra \$2.8 billion over the same time. Ok \$950 million will go a long way but \$2.8 billion would go much further.

### **So how does this relate to this agreement?**

Unfortunately, we can't put in an agreement that Victorian schools will get a certain amount of funding. However, when we campaign for an agreement it does give an opportunity raise the awareness of this issues and put on political pressure. The photo at the beginning of this document is from a strike in 2007. Among the placards is one which says "Lowest Funded State" from one of the strikes for the VGSA2008. Funding was raised as one of the central issues of that campaign even though ultimately it couldn't go into the agreement.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.igiveagonski.com.au/gonski\\_funds\\_for\\_victoria](http://www.igiveagonski.com.au/gonski_funds_for_victoria)

The problem is that each agreement is meant to be fully funded, but it doesn't seem to be and this agreement is no exception. We are introducing Learning Specialists which is something which I notionally agree with. The problem is the way that it is funded. If a top of the scale teacher applies for the position they will get a \$9639 pay rise. Given there is \$10 000 extra funding for this position this means it is fully funded. However, if a 6<sup>th</sup> year out teacher gets the position they get a pay rise of \$29278. The problem is that schools will only get an extra \$10 000 of funding and have a \$20 000 shortfall. This money will come out of already stretched budgets.

If a 6<sup>th</sup> year out teacher is the best candidate, the school's choice is to either give this teacher the job and finding \$20 000 extra from elsewhere or give the position to a top of the scale teacher. This is not a fair situation.

The other thing that may end up happening is that the current Leading Teacher positions may be tweaked so that they fall under the Learning Specialist criteria. Every Leading teacher position that can be changed into a Learning Specialist position will save the budget \$10 000.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this it is it right for the school, but I don't like there being incentives to act in such a way that may not be in the benefit of the school. I would much prefer that the Learning Specialist position to be funded in such a way that there would be no financial advantage/disadvantage between employing a Top of the Scale teacher, a middle of the scale teacher or dissolving a Leading Teacher position.

### **Reduction in teaching load**

In our Log of Claims, we asked for 18 hours face-to-face. Those of us who were at AEU council were told that the reason we couldn't get this is because the Government couldn't afford it. The reality is that they are reliant on underfunding schools to pay for other infrastructure projects. The money is there we just needed to fight for it.

### **Conclusion**

More funding means more staff and less work per individual. Almost all concerns about workload have a funding dimension. Fixing the funding problem is how we fix many of the other problems which include workload.

## Part 5: Contract Teaching

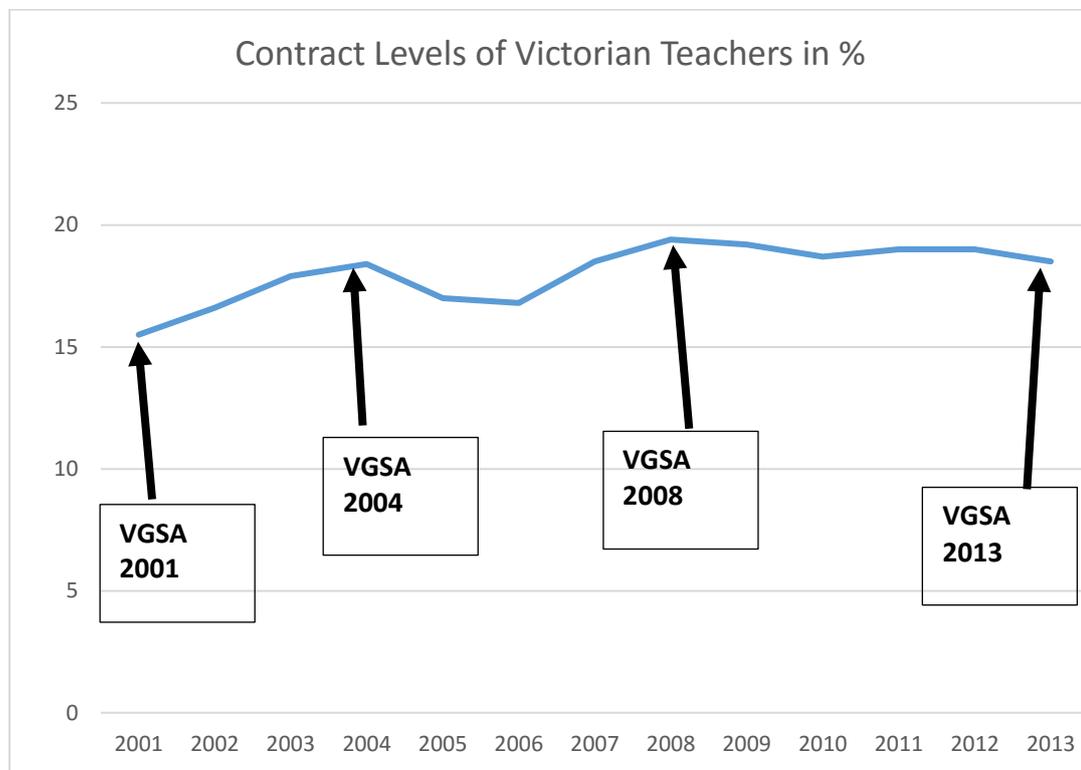
The VGSA2017 appears on the surface to have some great gains for contract teachers. Previously a teacher would have to prove why they should be made ongoing and now the Principal has to prove to the Department why they shouldn't be made ongoing if they are eligible to do so. Long standing ES staff on contract will also be made ongoing. Such changes are welcome, however, I feel like I have heard it all before. The VGSA2013 and VGSA2008 were also meant to be good for contract teachers.

### What is the current rate of contract teaching?

Although I am quite good with my figures I am unsure of the contract teaching level in Victoria since 2013. The government sporadically releases a Teacher Supply and Demand report each year or every two years or basically when they feel like it. The 2014-15 version is on the department website but has a broken link. Hence I don't have the figures for 2014 and 2015.

In the VGSA2013 a clause was inserted to for contract numbers to be monitored and given the AEU on a quarterly basis. However, the AEU is also not overly forthcoming with the contract rates. The AEU website says that contract teaching is at "unacceptable levels"<sup>6</sup> but doesn't specify what those levels are. I suspect it is because the monitoring didn't allow for an effective reduction.

I apologise for using out-of-date data but it was the best I could do on short notice, but it will be able to illustrate my point. Below you will see what each agreement has had on contract levels in Victoria.



<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aeuvic.asn.au/campaigns/secure-employment>

I want to be wrong about the VGSA2017 and I really do hope that it is really good for contract teachers but I'm not confident. The VGSA2001 increased levels of contract employment. The VGSA2004 created a temporary dip but was higher by the end of that agreement and the VGSA2008 maintained the same high levels of contract teaching before only marginally decreasing. Maybe the VGSA2013 improved things but I don't know of any public discussion on this.

The email sent out by James Merlino dated 24/3/17 says that at least 2500 teachers and 5000 ES staff will be made ongoing. A careful reading of this email doesn't give a time frame for this to happen. In a given year 5% of ongoing teachers will leave the profession which is around 1600 to 1700 teachers, which on average creates this many new ongoing positions. These positions are almost always taken up by existing contract staff. Does James Merlino mean 2500 more teachers in addition to the 1650 teachers who would normally become ongoing?

The wording of this email is ambiguous enough as a promise that we won't be able to hold him accountable but I guess we will see.

#### **Didn't we give up on Excess for Contract teachers?**

The VGSA2013 changed the excess process so that teachers declared in-excess would no longer have priority for positions. This was promoted as a way of helping with the contract system. I argued last time that this wasn't going to help the contract situation and it appears that I was unfortunately correct on this.

It should be noted that the VGSA2017 does nothing substantial to rectify the issues that in-excess teachers face.

## **Part 6: How did we go from Teacher shortage to oversupply?**

We have all spoken to a young teacher who is keen and is a quality teacher and yet doesn't seem to be able to get a short term contract let alone an ongoing position. We now have an oversupply of teachers, but when I started in 2004 all the talk was about an impending teaching shortage. So what happened.

When Kennett was in power there was mass lay-offs and it was extremely difficult to get a job. However, the cause this time is not massive lay-offs. In 2006 they were predicting a teacher shortage in the secondary sector their recommendation is below.

*Therefore, there is a need to recruit additional secondary teachers from interstate and overseas, previous years' graduates not working in the profession and from former teachers wishing to rejoin the profession.<sup>7</sup>*

Yet in 2013 an impending growing shortage had turned into a surplus.

*Secondary teachers are in oversupply, except in some subjects such as Technology, Mathematics, Physics and LOTE. An oversupply is likely to continue to 2020.*

I would like to say that this has been because of good policy but there are some reasons for the over-supply that are not necessarily good.

### **An Aging Teacher Workforce**

There has been talk for years about the aging teacher workforce but something unusual has happened since 2001. The percentage of teachers in the workforce who are aged 55 or more has more than doubled. Rather than making up less than 10% of the workforce, they now make up more than 20% of the workforce.

Now I work with a number of the 55+ year old teachers and their experience is invaluable and they are still quality teachers. This section is not about criticising these teachers but noting changes and why these changes may have occurred. I would like to believe that 55+ teachers have all decided to work longer because of their love of teaching, but there are some changes that have affected things.

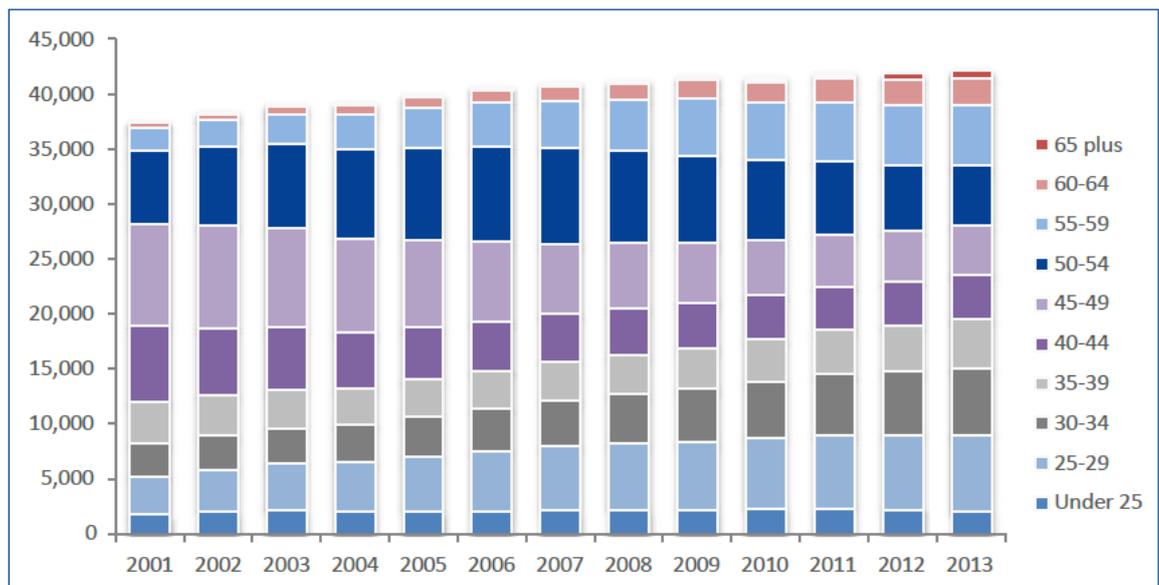
You may have heard of the "54-11". If you started teaching early enough you could retire just before you turned 55 and get a big lump sum payment. Many have taken this option and left teaching but some did return. However, more teachers don't have don't have this option and are now having to teach longer and contribute more to their superannuation so they can retire.

Part of the teacher shortage has been solved by making retiring at 55 unfeasible for almost all teachers. The graph below shows that the fastest growing demographic amongst our teachers is the 55+.

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<sup>7</sup> Teacher Supply and Demand Report 2006, Pg 34

Figure 3.11: Teachers in government schools by age 2001–2013 (headcount)



Source: DEECD, Performance and Evaluation Division, Customised data set, 2014

Note: Government figures include the following classes of teacher: Graduate, Accomplished, Expert, Leading and Paraprofessional.

### Less teachers in schools

If you have been teaching for a while and have felt that you are teaching more students than what you have in the past, then it probably isn't your imagination. Although there hasn't been a change in class sizes or face to face teaching but there has been an increase in the Students per Teacher ratio. In 2011 it was 13.5 but in 2015 it 14.1<sup>8</sup>.

This amounts to a 4.4% increase and although might not seem like much, it has a dual effect. It means that teachers who had a job had on average 4.4% more students which is an increase in workload, but worse is knowing that it directly because 4.4% less teachers were employed. This amounts to over 1500 teachers. I agree that we should fight for contract teachers but we also need to fight for those who want to be teachers but can't because schools have a budget that is too tight to employ extra staff.

### Conclusion

Teachers today are working harder and longer than they ever have. Although there isn't a single cause I believe that once again this all comes down to funding.

<sup>8</sup> Productivity Commission report.

## **Part 7: Performance Pay and when a win is not really a win?**

If we wind back the clock to 2013, the Coalition Government were openly saying that they wanted to restrict the number of teachers incrementing up the scale. Although I'm at the top of the scale I'm pleased that this proposed agreement has a clause from preventing this from happening. We were extremely lucky because this undoes a clause that was put in the VGSA2013.

"The Employer undertakes that the existing performance and development process will continue to apply for salary progression purposes the employer will consult the union(s) regarding the development of any new performance and development process" VGSA2013 13(3)

Although it is pretty arrogant to quote yourself this is what I said back in 2013 about the above clause.

"This clause adds a new dimension to the incrementing. The existing performance and development process is still in place but the government can change it provided that they consult the AEU. Consulting is about adequately informing people about what is about to happen and allow them input. You can be consulted and not agree, but that doesn't mean that you can stop thing from happening. Unfortunately this clause allows the Government to change the performance review process which they have stated that they want to happen. All they need to do is to inform the AEU, then discuss it with them and finally press ahead. There is no clause to suggest that the Government and the AEU have to reach mutual agreement about changes to the process."

You can rightly argue that the Coalition Government never actually were able to implement the policy that they wanted but they came very close and closer than what most people imagine. As soon as the VGSA2013 was reached they attempted to implement their performance pay. Coalition members were talking about Performance Pay before rank and file AEU members had even voted on the Agreement. Their haste was ultimately their undoing and they rushed it and didn't consult properly.

The Coalition did lose in the Federal Court but because they didn't give adequate time to consult. This cost the AEU thousands of member's dollars to fight and win what was the status quo. Luckily 2014 was an election year and the rhetoric about increments subsided. As we know the Labor party won and we will never know what the Coalition was planning for their second term, but I suspect that they would have pursued Performance Pay again. If they included a lengthy and exhaustive consultative process they would have probably been successful. But ultimately we will never know.

The point of this story is two-fold. The first is that to point out that one of the big wins in the VGSA2017 is closing a clause opened by the previous agreement, which was completely foreseeable and pointed out by people like myself before it was ratified. The other is that we should never rush any agreement.

## Part 8: Summary and Conclusion

The VGSA2017 is certainly not an agreement where we have gone backwards, but we certainly haven't made any major inroads either. The 4 Professional Practise days won't make a big impact and our Face-to-Face teaching remains the same. There is no improvement in class sizes. The 30/8 split in our work is a simple rearrangement but I don't see how it is ultimately going to reduce it. The increased focus on Peer Observation is likely to increase our workload further still and any option to opt out has been taken away.

The pay rises are not as good as advertised because they are averaged out of 4 years and not 4.5 years. However, for the top of the scale they are on par with other states and good improvements for ES and CRTs. However, teachers incrementing up the scale miss out dramatically again by around \$50 000 or more over their teaching career. These teachers are our future and we all know that our profession are only as good as the teachers we produce. We should be doing far more to look after them.

The benefits of changes to Contract Teaching have been over inflated in the past and this has made me very sceptical. In any case the issue is really funding anyway. We are the lowest funded state and have been since at least 2005 and we keep falling further behind the National Average. Although we can't demand funding in an agreement we can make it a central issue of our industrial campaign if we vote 'No'.

I feel it is unfortunate that members ultimately get pressured into voting for an Agreement even if they disagree with it. The AEU Leadership has recommended that you vote 'Yes' but I believe such a recommendation unfairly taints members' perceptions. The last time I checked the AEU is not a corporation. We shouldn't be sold that this is a good agreement and instead let members freely make up their own minds.

Is the proposed VGSA2017 the best we can get at this point of time without industrial action? The answer is probably yes. If you vote 'No' to this proposed agreement you will be voting for our negotiators going back to the table and for an industrial campaign. The Government is not going to simply roll-over if we vote 'No' and we have to be prepared to fight for something better.

I am prepared and always have been to strive for what is fair and just, regardless of how difficult or how long it will take. Regardless of 'Yes' or 'No' vote I know that I will be fine, but this is bigger than me as an individual. This about our fellow colleagues whether they are ES, Teachers or Principals. Will you fight for something better for them? More importantly will you fight for something better for our students?

I know that voting 'No' is the more difficult option but for sake of Public Education I believe that it is the correct decision.