



FED: Best and brightest will change course to teach in Victoria

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EDUCATION By Julian Drape

CANBERRA, April 21 AAP - Graduates originally headed for careers in law, engineering or accountancy will instead pick up pieces of chalk and march into Victorian classrooms next year, says federal Education Minister Julia Gillard.

Under the **Teach for Australia** plan unveiled on Tuesday, top university graduates will be coaxed in front of blackboards with the offer of fast-tracked teaching degrees, mentoring and a guaranteed corporate career after they leave the classroom.

"This is about high performing graduates doing an accelerated teacher education program, going out into schools and making a difference, supported in partnership with some of our big corporations and the Business Council of Australia (BCA)," Ms Gillard told ABC Radio.

"We can offer idealistic young people some options, including an option to go teaching for a few years and then go on to a corporate opportunity."

The scheme, first floated by the education minister last year, is based on programs targeting top graduates in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Through **Teach for Australia**, "high-achieving" graduates will sign up for an intensive two-year placement in disadvantaged schools "where they can make the greatest difference", Ms Gillard said.

They'll initially study a six-week, university-designed and accredited teacher education course.

Throughout the two years they'll receive support and mentoring from experienced teachers and business leaders.

Then they'll be granted a teaching qualification.

If they decide to leave teaching the graduates will have a career waiting with a corporate partner.

"We need to get new, quality teachers into schools," Ms Gillard said.

"This is the start of an exciting new entrepreneurial approach."

The first intake of up to 90 graduates will be placed in Victorian schools in 2010, with the program to be rolled out nationally after that.

It will be run by **Teach for Australia** - an independent not-for-profit organisation working with government and business.

BCA chief executive Katie Lahey says giving Australia's most talented graduates an opportunity to teach in disadvantaged schools is a good idea.

"It has the potential to make an important contribution to lifting the status of teaching and to improved education outcomes," she said in a statement.

"It will assist in building wider business and community linkages and support for the teaching

professions and school education over the medium to long term.

"In this way, we can lift the status of teaching as a career and a profession."