



Herald Sun (Melbourne)

Tuesday 30/03/2010

Page: 8
Section: General News
Region: Melbourne, AU
Circulation: 514000
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 191.34 sq.cms.



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press clip

Call to man up in the classroom

Boys suffer from male teacher shortage

John Masanauskas
education reporter

THE State Government wants more male teachers in classrooms amid concern many boys are lacking role models.

Only one in five state primary school teachers is male, but new figures show the tide may be turning. Education Minister Bronwyn Pike said yesterday that men were responding to special programs to recruit teachers.

"Male teachers are crucial role models for school-aged children and I urge all men to consider teaching as a career path," she said.

Equal opportunity laws preclude the Government from discriminating in favour of male teaching applicants.

But almost half of new teachers appointed in the past two years under programs such as the Maths and Science Scholarship, Teach

for Australia and the Career Change Program were men, according to the Education Department. Ms Pike said of the 31 participants in this year's Career Change Program, 24 were male.

"In this program, participants are employed full-time with paid study leave to complete their teacher qualification over two years," she said. "Our recruitment campaigns are grabbing the attention of men who are keen on teaching as a career."

Victorian Principals Association president Gabrielle Leigh said low status and tradition were barriers to more men becoming primary teachers. "A number of our students don't necessarily have a father figure at home, and many don't have a mother figure, so it would be nice to have an equal balance," she said. "There's some excellent teachers both male and female so it shouldn't be gender-based."

"It's excellent to have both

male and female role models very early on and throughout schooling."

At secondary level, the picture is brighter for gender balance where 40 per cent of government teachers are men.

Opposition education spokesman Martin Dixon said while any increase in male teachers was encouraging, the Government was boasting about very small recruitment programs. "The Government is fiddling around the edges instead of addressing the problem in a general sense," he said.

Mr Dixon said men considering teaching were put off by the huge workload and rising bureaucratic demands.

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**Do we need more male teachers in our classrooms?
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