



16 February 2026

## Teachers must be better supported to help manage growing classroom complexity and challenging student behaviours

Classrooms are becoming increasingly complex, with teachers and support staff responding to [diverse learning needs](#), challenging behaviours and student wellbeing issues. This complexity is driven by broader social, economic and health pressures, but it is being felt most [acutely in our schools](#).

Education professionals are deeply committed to student success, but without adequate staffing, specialist support, time and training, current demands are [unsustainable](#).

Class sizes are rightly recognised as a key factor in quality learning, and the IEU has successfully campaigned for and secured [class size protections](#) in many collective agreements.

However, class size alone is not the full story.

As classroom complexity increases, even smaller classes can become difficult to manage. Teachers are spending less time teaching, as growing demands require them to respond to a complex combination of behavioural, cultural, language, medical and learning needs.

When staff are not provided with adequate support, classroom complexity significantly increases workload pressures and contributes to burnout and ongoing workforce retention challenges.

IEU members across the country are campaigning right now for stronger [support and protections](#):

### *Support Staff and Teaching Assistants*

- Accurate classification structures and wage levels that properly recognise the work value of support staff assisting students with additional learning needs
- Additional paid hours to be offered to part-time and term-time teaching assistants to attend classes and activities involving students with identified support needs
- Payment of health care allowances where support staff are required to care for or support students with documented health care plans
- Access to high-quality, ongoing professional development focused on student learning, wellbeing and inclusion needs

### *Teachers and School Leaders*

- Targeted resources and guaranteed funding to ensure adequate release time for teachers and access to specialist psychological and behavioural supports
- Formal recognition, including additional remuneration and release time, for coordination roles undertaken by inclusive education and learning support teachers
- Reduced class sizes where students attend with identified learning or support needs
- Collaboratively developed and enforced safety procedures and protocols for employees working with students who exhibit challenging or complex behaviours