

## **Alan Jones commentary on Craig's revelations of overseas exodus of Australian teachers**

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**ALAN JONES:** There's a front page story - you might have a view about this - I'm sure you will, in today's *Australian* newspaper, highlighting how Australia is losing its best teachers because of inadequate pay.

According to the story, thousands of Australian teachers leave Australia each year to work overseas for better pay and conditions.

The Labor backbencher, who should be on the frontbench, Dr Craig Emerson, says he's got figures which indicate that 8,400 teachers left Australia in 2004/2005. That's twice the number who left a decade earlier. That means that even after taking into account foreign teachers coming into the country, Australia has lost more than 18,000 teachers in the past decade.

Craig Emerson says, to stem the trend Australia must introduce performance pay in all state schools. I'm not too sure how you measure performance in a student. For example, I mean I might have a student in my class and I might be quite a good teacher, and the student might be middle of the road, and suddenly the child's performance has started to improve but that's because he's actually being coached by Ross in his football team and he gets on well with Ross and he's done well and Ross is out there saying to him, now listen, it's no use being good at football unless you pitch in over here.

So, do I get measured on performance pay, that I've brought this child from being a 60-per-center to a 70-per-center, when indeed there may be influences, as there are in every educational process, outside my classroom? Very hard to measure performance or who is responsible for that performance.

Equally, you may be a teacher who does a very good job - it mightn't be a very good job, a good job in the classroom - but the contribution you make to people's education outside as the swimming teacher or in playground duty or working in the library or running an after school charity where the kids are involved in assisting people who need houses to be washed or drains to be cleaned at home, that teacher has a wide influence outside the classroom. Where does that teacher stand in relation to performance pay?

Now Craig Emerson is right in terms of saying that there are teachers leaving, but how do you address the issue? Now, Craig Emerson says the principal knows who the best teachers are because other schools are after them and that's a fair point.

And what do you make of the salaries? Most teachers start on a salary of about \$43,000 to \$45,000. New South Wales teachers receive slightly more, averaging between \$48,000 and \$50,000. Incremental pay rises stop after eight or nine years and you reach a top salary of \$68,000.

A very important job, isn't it, teaching your kids? Is that enough? It's obviously not enough if we've lost 18,000 teachers in the past decade.