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No six-week teachers

Tanya Chilcott

SCHOOLS REPORTER

SIX weeks is too short a time in which to become a teacher, Premier Anna Bligh said yesterday during Queensland's inaugural online People's Question Time.

The controversial Teach for Australia program, moving Year 7 into high school, inevitable virtual classrooms, and concerns over a proposed school inspectorate were just some of the issues discussed in the forum, which was streamed live on the internet.

One quarter of the forum was taken up with the proposed move of Year 7 into high school, with Education Minister Geoff Wilson assuring teachers he wanted to keep them despite the shift requiring more specialist secondary and fewer primary school staff.

Teach for Australia continues to attract controversy, with Queensland Catholic Education Commission executive director Mike Byrne saying the teachers, trained for six weeks before taking control of classrooms and con-

tinuing their studies part-time, shouldn't be placed in the most challenging classrooms.

Premier Bligh said she was glad the question of Teach for Australia had been raised, arguing media had misrepresented the issue.

As outlined in *The Courier-Mail*, which revealed the Government was considering the proposal, the teachers will be given a reduced workload to allow them to continue to study part-time for two years under the guidance of mentors and advisers.

"I don't think anyone thinks six weeks is enough to become a teacher," she said.

"The point is, this is about a postgraduate diploma in the skills. The opportunity to get people who have had life experience, who have worked in other careers, who have something to offer our children and a passion for teaching, is something we shouldn't miss out on.

"But equally, we need to make sure they are well prepared to go into the classroom and we need to assess this program and see how it goes."

Ms Bligh welcomed the idea of a national wage scheme for teachers, but said she didn't think it would happen in the real world.

She thought virtual classrooms, where parents would be able to see what their child was doing in school through computer contact, were inevitable, and air-conditioning in every classroom would also happen, but it would take time.

Concerns were raised about the proposed school inspectorate and Independent Schools Queensland's director David Robertson asked the Government for an assurance that school autonomy would remain.

However no such assurance was given.



ASSURANCE:
Geoff Wilson