

Teaching's good life simply a myth

THE popular belief that teachers are in the job for short working days and long holidays has been debunked by research.

Most people pursue a teaching career because they believe they are good at it, like the challenges of the job, or have an altruistic desire to help children.

"The public has got a view . . . that teaching is an easy job, it's a nine-to-five job, you get lots and lots of holidays," said researcher Paul Richardson.

"These aspects of teaching are no longer what really attract people at all. They are looking for intellectual challenge."

Dr Richardson and Dr Helen Watt, of Monash University's education faculty, canvassed 1600 teacher trainees who started at Monash and two Sydney universities in 2002 and 2003.

The findings, to be presented at a national education conference in Adelaide tomorrow, come at a time of teacher shortages across the country.

Dr Watt said recruitment drives should not focus on short work days or long holidays, as people pursuing the job for those reasons rarely stayed. Those who planned to work hard remained committed.

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REASONS FOR TEACHING

- Believe they have an ability.
- Enjoy the work, finding it intellectually challenging and rewarding.
- Have had positive experiences of teaching and learning.
- Want to shape the future.
- Want to improve social equity through education.
- Have a social conscience and want to make a contribution.
- Want to work with children and adolescents.