



Math teacher crisis

DAVID HASTIE

AUSTRALIA is facing a shortage of specialised senior school mathematics teachers, one of Victoria's maths teachers has warned.

Describing the current shortage as "a crisis", Russell Boyle, Dean of Mathematics at the private Ruyton Girls School, said senior maths teachers needed to be paid significantly more to keep them from turning their back on the education system.

He said the average wage for a senior maths teacher, between \$60,000 and \$80,000, was not

'Underpaid, no career'

enough. Mr Boyle said it was time a school's best teachers were among its highest earners.

"You have to offer appreciably higher salaries because you have to compete with a number of other professions," Mr Boyle said.

"Why would you go into teaching when you can earn more money doing something else and have a better career prospect?

"It has to be significantly more, otherwise you just won't attract young people to the profession."

Mr Boyle said students increasingly were turning away from more difficult maths subjects.

After universities dropped the VCE subject specialist maths as a prerequisite for engineering degrees, he had seen a significant drop in the numbers of students undertaking the tough subject.

While he acknowledged studying maths was a challenge for most students, he said schools needed to stress the importance of completing maths subjects.

"I'm finding it increasingly more difficult to get (students) to persevere when they don't require specialist maths to go on to university to do things like engineering," Mr Boyle said.

"We've got a shortage of students studying advanced maths

and that's coming through now to the profession.

"There just aren't enough people to actually teach.

"So it's a bit of a vicious circle and it's only going to get worse before it gets better."

Mr Boyle said all schools were finding it hard to replace experienced maths teachers.

"To get into a position to teach senior secondary school mathematics takes a long time," he said.

"If you haven't got young people coming through studying advanced mathematics, it's going to take them even longer."