

Mr G M Piper MP
Chair
Legislative Assembly
Public Accounts Committee
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

DGL20/418

PublicAccountsCommittee.PAC@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Piper

Thank you for your correspondence of 29 June 2020 (your ref: D20/26095), regarding the Auditor-General's performance audit report – Supply of secondary teachers in STEM-related disciplines. I will respond to each recommendation.

Recommendation 1 and 2

Since the audit recommendation that the workforce planning model be improved to better understand and communicate supply and demand for teachers, the Department of Education has been working diligently to enhance our subject and key learning area forecast capabilities. This model provides the capacity to more clearly observe the demand for teachers as well as the supply of teachers across the State and provides a forecast of these figures out to 2030.

The Department is leveraging the information in this model to support development of supply initiatives under the Long Term Teacher Supply strategy. This work is expected to be completed in October 2020 and will examine areas of teacher shortage, both by subject and location, within NSW to develop supply side initiatives. This strategy aims to support in field teaching, continuity of education and support the Department to offer the breadth of the curriculum across the State.

As part of this strategy, the Department is assessing the best methods of communicating areas of teacher demand, both with universities so that teacher supply can be better aligned to meet this demand, as well as how this is best communicated to those considering teaching as a career. At present the [redacted] publishes information on the demand for teachers in NSW, which is available in the Workforce Profile of the teaching profession available on the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation website at www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/workforce-profile-of-the-nsw-teaching-profession-2017.

Recommendation 2



From 2018, a range of strengthened assessment measures have been incorporated into the application process for the Department's scholarships. The more robust assessment framework includes a teacher suitability assessment measuring cognitive skills and emotional intelligence, and an online, on demand behavioural interview with questions more closely aligning to the Teacher Success Profile.

These assessment measures are consistent with the strengthened requirements for entry into the teaching profession in NSW public schools, announced by the then Minister in September 2018.

There was an overall decline in the number of applications in 2018 for the 2019 scholarship program, including the STEM retraining scholarship targeting qualified teacher seeking to retrain in STEM related disciplines. It is likely that the strengthened assessment requirements did have some impact, both in terms of initial applications as well as the progression of applicants throughout the process. In 2018, up to 100 STEM retraining scholarships were made available for the 2019 program. Despite a targeted promotional campaign, only 62 applications were received, of which 18 scholarships were accepted. These scholars commenced study in 2019. Given the program of study is typically two years, it is too early to comment on overall completion rates for scholars commencing the program under the new assessment model.

In 2019, further financial enhancements were made to the STEM retraining scholarship to encourage more interest. The new package includes a doubling of the annual study grant payment from \$5,000 to \$10,000, as well as eight days of study leave and a \$3,000 completion bonus. There were 28 applications received for the program, and of the 13 applicants who were successful in the assessment process, only nine ultimately accepted the scholarship. The STEM retraining scholarship, as a stand-alone program will not be offered in 2020. Teachers seeking to retrain in STEM related subjects will be able to do so by applying for the 'Learn and Teach' sponsorship program.

Also in 2019, the Department launched the teachMaths.Now scholarship, specifically targeting STEM career changers and STEM undergraduate students seeking a move to a teaching career. The scholarship provides up to \$50,000 equivalent course fees, part-time employment as a paraprofessional during the final three semesters of study (typical duration is four semesters) and a permanent teaching role at the successful conclusion of study. Following a targeted marketing campaign with sound engagement, 99 applications were received for a total of 80 available places. Following the assessment process, 20 scholarships have been accepted.

The Department's Teacher Education Scholarships (TES) and teach.Rural scholarships also prioritise placements for students seeking to study STEM subjects. There has been a trending decline in both the number of applications and subsequent number of scholarships awarded. This reflects both anecdotal evidence regarding the impact of increased standards for entry into teaching in NSW public schools announced in 2018, and the general declining patterns of enrolment in initial teacher education courses, including in STEM disciplines. All scholarships are  towards areas of geographical workforce need .

In 2018, a total of 941 applications were received across these two scholarship programs, with 258 offers made and 214 scholars accepting. Of these, 50 scholars are studying a STEM subject. In 2019, a total of 1,143 applications were received, with 132 offers made and 105 scholars accepting. Of these, 75 scholars are studying a STEM subject. It is important to note that not all applicants are eligible to progress in the scholarship application process, and not all applicants offered a scholarship ultimately chose to accept, or may initially accept and subsequently decline for a range of personal reasons. Since the commencement of the 2019 school year, 384 scholars have been permanently appointed to STEM related teaching positions.

Scholars appointed in a particular year will represent a range of starting years, and will not yet reflect any changes as a result of the new assessment protocols.

The Department continues to have scholarship targets, and has further refined promotional strategies to support engagement in the scholarship opportunities. Noting the overall decline in applications, consistent with the patterns of enrolment in Universities, the Department has commenced a significant workstream to address Teacher Supply, with rapid, mid and long term strategies being developed. In response to trends in scholarship applications and commencements, further refinement of financial packages, within current budget constraints, will be implemented for the 2021 scholarship programs due to open over the next few weeks.

Recommendation 3

The Department has made changes to its Professional Experience Agreements to support workforce need. The current Agreements, which cover 2019 - 2021, include a joint responsibility of the initial teacher education provider and the Department to give priority to the selection and matching of teacher education students for professional experience placements based on the Department's areas of workforce need. These areas are identified by Human Resources and include all STEM subjects.

Under the current Agreements, in 2019 the Department established a specialist STEM Hub School involving two primary and one secondary school in the Parramatta Education Precinct. This STEM Hub worked with several initial teacher education providers to place 17 STEM students in 2019.

A further initiative is a program to encourage pre-service teachers in metropolitan universities to undertake their final professional experience placement in rural and remote schools. This program develops behaviourally informed communication to pre-service teachers, books and pays for accommodation and pays an allowance to eligible final year pre-service teachers. In 2019, 55 final year teacher education students from 6 metropolitan universities went to geographically isolated schools, with all of them saying they would consider returning to rural and remote NSW to find fulltime employment in the future.

In 2021, the Department will review its Professional Experience Agreements for the 2022 – 2025 cycle to further support high quality professional experience placements in areas of workforce need.

Should you require further information, please contact [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] by telephone on [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Mark Scott AO
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
22 July 2020

