

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Questions from The Hon Mark Latham MLC

Responses from Mr Angelo Gavrielatos President, NSW Teachers Federation

Portfolio Committee No: 3 – Education

Thursday, 4 August 2022

1. Question one

To be treated and rewarded financially as a modern profession, doesn't teaching need to embrace the modern professional standard of performance measurement? If the Department of Education can identify our best teachers in NSW, why can't value-added performance measurement apply to all teachers?

- a: As our submission made clear, the teacher shortages are due to uncompetitive salaries and unsustainable workloads. There is no evidence performance pay schemes work or will make the profession more attractive to high achieving young people.

2. Question two

How many times this century has the Teachers Federation been involved in industrial negotiations with the NSW Government when it traded away higher pay for improved working conditions? Both sides of politics have wanted to hold down budget expenditure on teachers' salaries, offering up easier conditions as an alternative. Why has the Federation gone along with this strategy, yet now complains about inadequate teacher pay?

- a: None. The Federation has successfully achieved improvements in both the salaries of teachers and their working conditions via industrial negotiation over the course of its history. Both are equally important and remain so today. Our concerns about uncompetitive salaries are reflected in internal Department of Education documents quoted in our submission that warn that the salaries of teachers have been falling compared to other professions for 30 years and this makes it less attractive to high performing young people. Since 2011, the NSW Government has had a one-size-fits-all salary cap in place which contributed significantly to this decline, as the Gallop inquiry found.

3. Question three

Isn't the declining status of teaching in part due to its evolution from hard-nosed academic achievement to the growing focus on wellbeing, pastoral care and social work? Why would

talented school leavers go into teaching when they perceive it as social work and can find far greater financial rewards in other professions?

- a:** Research shows the reason talented school leavers are not choosing teaching is due to the workload and salaries. There is no reduction in the focus on academic achievement in schools but there is a recognition that the needs of students have increased significantly along with the complexity of those needs. The Department of Education in 2019 described the student cohort as “extremely complex with diverse and overlapping needs.” Addressing the physical, emotional, and mental health needs of students is essential in order for them to be successful learners. The problems arise when too much of this responsibility falls on teachers due to the absence of appropriate specialist support in schools, such as school counsellors, and a lack of community-based health and welfare services.

4. Question four

To maintain its membership numbers, why has the Federation protected under-performing teachers in our schools, dragging down the reputation of the entire profession? Next to no teachers are ever sacked for incompetence - another breach of modern professional standards and accountability. Isn't this another leading reason for the declining status of teachers and the ageing nature of the profession?

- a:** Research shows the public's regard for the teaching profession is high but they understand teaching has become a more difficult and challenging profession and the salaries paid to teachers do not reflect the efforts they make and the skills and expertise required to be successful. The inquiry needs to maintain a focus on these primary causes of the teacher shortages.