

INQUIRY INTO INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

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Theme:

Summary

Submission #39

Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers

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Submission

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Attachments

Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers

Submission to the Inquiry. I have also uploaded the file.

The New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council (SPC) is pleased to respond to the invitation to make submissions to this inquiry. Members of the SPC have first-hand experience in a full range of schools in all parts of the State, and are familiar with the outcomes of current policies and procedures that affect the supply of quality teachers in their schools. This submission is only a brief one, but members of the executive of the SPC are willing to answer questions in more detail if requested. Please contact Jim McAlpine, Deputy President, Principal of Moss Vale High School, on 02 4868 1717 for the contact details of those principals who are readily available to respond to any questions.

Recruitment of Teachers:

Principals have some major concerns over the present processes of recruiting new teachers. These concerns include:

The failure to recruit the best graduands from universities. The private sector is able to recruit top scholars in teacher training institutions well before the Department of Education and Training is prepared to offer employment to these people, even though these potential employees have been

identified by the Department. By the time offers are made, many of these graduands have already accepted attractive offers in publicly-funded private schools.

This delay is to the detriment of quality teaching in NSW public schools, and exacerbates the difficulty in recruiting qualified, capable teachers in high-demand areas such as Mathematics and the Sciences. There is some evidence that in recent years, the vast majority of such graduates from Macquarie University have accepted positions in the non-government sector.

The ACT has overcome this situation by the early identification of top graduands and the offer of employment nearly six months before employment is to start. This offer is for teaching within their system, and the particular location is decided closer to the start of the school year. This is one way of ensuring that the best teacher trainees are available to public schools, even if it means that offers have to be made before specific vacancies are known.

There is anecdotal evidence that the NSW Department of Education and Training Staffing Directorate does not communicate effectively with potential new teachers, with those who have been interviewed receiving minimal feedback on the likelihood of employment, even after a school year starts and there are known vacancies. Part of the reason for the paucity of communication is the serious understaffing of this section of the Department, with vacancies not being filled and staff being stretched to the limit to achieve within unrealistic budget restraints.

Overseas teachers. There have also been continuing concerns over the recruitment of inappropriate overseas teachers whose skills are such that, in many cases, principals have been forced to use improvement programs with people who should not have been appointed. This is damaging to schools and particularly to students, although there have been recent improvements in this area. The implementation of the new orientation program for overseas trained teachers seeking permanent employment in NSW public education with its requirement for assessment has been a good step and should be incorporated into the Institute of Teachers procedures. Differences between federal and state requirements for educational professionals migrating to Australia should be addressed by the relevant Ministers to ensure quality teachers are available across Australia and there should be flexibility in qualifications and consistency in standards to encourage the transfer of teachers between states.

Casual teachers as potential recruits. Principals throughout the State are able to recommend for permanent employment some tremendous casual teachers, but the present staffing agreement does not permit this to happen. Its inflexibility is a barrier to the recruitment of teachers who have demonstrated in classrooms that they have what is required to provide quality teaching for our students, but in some cases they are forced into the private sector in order to obtain permanent employment. It is made even harder for schools when they lose a good casual teacher who is replaced in the staffing operation by someone with much less teaching talent or suitability for that particular school. If principals had the authority to offer permanent employment to top casual teachers when a permanent vacancy arises, there would be a significant improvement in the quality of the teaching service.

Hard to Staff Schools. The points incentive system has been only partially successful as these schools need teachers who will stay longer than three years. This system could be revised so that teachers would be encouraged stay for 4, 5 or 6 years by awarding them a disproportionate number of points for staying on. It is certainly appropriate to evaluate the points system and revise it appropriately.

Training of Teachers. The rigour of teacher training should be such that the quality of the profession is maintained or even increased. Teacher training courses need to incorporate Departmental and Board of Studies requirements and initiatives. The present emphasis on Quality Teaching in NSW government schools should be the focus of teacher training courses. The content of these courses needs to be constantly under review to ensure that beginning teachers are professionally equipped to meet the current needs in schools. As well as being properly prepared for using technology in teaching, new teachers need to have skills in teaching students with disabilities in mainstream classes. Beginning teachers who are recruited from other states or overseas also need to have these teaching skills before they are appointed, so it would be useful if the NSW DET could inform teacher training institutions across Australia what needs to be included in courses for those who wish to teach in NSW.

Institute of Teachers and Training. Teacher education courses need to be reviewed to ensure that their content and assessment will prepare graduates to meet the standards of the NSW Institute of Teachers. This will ensure that graduates can gain permanent employment in NSW and that they can reach accreditation at professional competence level within three years. Any lack of thoroughness in such a review will result in graduate teachers who struggle to leap the gap between the content of their training and the standards expected of them in the first years of their careers.

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