

**Submission
No 27**

INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Organisation:

Name: Ms Jennifer Mater

Telephone:

Date Received: 24/02/2005

Theme:

Summary

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

24 FEB 2005

RECEIVED

The Director,
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

RE: Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers in NSW.

In relation to item 7) "any other matter arising from these terms of reference".

My name is Jennifer Mater. I am married to a "career change" teacher who made the decision a few years ago to leave the finance industry and go into teaching. His reasons were quite varied but did include a desire to "make a difference" to the lives of his students as the advertising campaign of the time so exhorted him. Sadly, however, his experiences since graduating have left him very disillusioned and disappointed.

I am writing this submission in order to draw your attention to certain problems with regard to the employment of teachers once they have graduated.

Last year I wrote two letters which expressed this disillusionment and which I believed raised the issue of the inadequacy of the current staffing and recruitment methods. I have attached copies of both. (Although very similar there are significant variations). My point in writing was that my husband actually had a number of important characteristics which he would bring to the teaching role, but for which there was absolutely no provision in the current staffing method used by the Department of Education. These characteristics included academic excellence, maturity, life experience, parenting skills (along with a well founded empathy for parents) as well as a wealth of experience in community involvement. My point was that perhaps the employment processes themselves needed to be reviewed so as to tap into these important characteristics.

The reply I received from the Hon. Dr Andrew Refshauge, (see copy attached), contained a lengthy explanation of the very staffing procedures with which I had taken issue, and then proceeded to offer the extremely helpful advice that my husband should "review and update his special aptitudes and areas of expertise codes and his preference list for employment".

This correspondence was preceded by a phone call, referred to in the letter, from Ms Joyce Atkins, the Coordinator of Teacher Staffing, during which Ms

Atkins attempted to establish whether or not my husband had engaged in a special activity (which might be of some use in some school somewhere), something along the lines of perhaps directing a play for the local Drama Society or similar. He could thus "update his special aptitudes and areas of expertise codes". I would have thought that the ability to make a difference on a daily basis in the classroom would have been of far more benefit to the students in NSW public schools than an ability to run a one off extra-curricular event such as a drama production. Incidentally, his previous degree in Mass Communication would have enabled him to do just that, but sadly, there isn't a "code" for that.

The then Minister for Education clearly missed my point so I shall make it again more clearly.

The current staffing procedures are simply not designed to take into account some of the very characteristics which many parents would want to see in the person entrusted with the education of their child. Until the "codes" are reviewed, the public education system will continue to lose valuable teachers. These potential staff will either go to other careers, where their merits are more readily recognized, and to which they turn while enduring the interminable wait on "the list" for a permanent job, or to the private system where they are closely followed by parents seeking a better quality education for their children.

I live in hope that the current inquiry may result in some useful change to the current situation.

Yours faithfully,



Jennifer Mater
BA DipEd Macq.

COPY

The Hon. Dr A. J. Refshauge MP
Minister for Education and Training
Level 31 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Dr Refshauge,

I am writing to draw your attention to a disappointing situation concerning the employment of recent education graduates.

A few years ago, my husband David responded to the campaign exhorting people to "teach and make a difference". Accordingly, with the support of the family, but not without some significant costs, he left his job in the finance industry and embarked on a course of study which has now earned him a second degree and qualified him to teach students from K-6.

During his studies, he made a point of working extremely hard to ensure that when he graduated, he would do so with an excellent academic record. We not unreasonably, expected that he might be a so-called "targeted graduate" on a number of grounds, including his maturity, life experience, gender, but most importantly, his academic record. In fact his record is such that the Golden Key Society which recognises academic excellence has invited him to become a member.

In spite of his excellent record, and perhaps more tellingly, in spite of the current rhetoric concerning the dire need for male role models in primary schools, my husband was not offered a permanent position in the public school system. Indeed it would appear that he is destined to spend quite a number of years in pursuit of casual employment with all its attendant stress and insecurities.

Aside from his personal disillusionment with respect to the education department, another disappointing outcome of this situation is that the public education system stands to lose the services of yet another excellent teacher. As a stakeholder in his employment, I can quite confidently predict that in spite of his genuine support for the idea of public education, and his genuine desire to make a difference within the public education system, he will in all likelihood move to the private system at the earliest opportunity. By necessity, his commitment to the philosophy of public education will be outweighed by the needs of our family. As a father of two young children, he needs secure employment close enough to home to enable his continued shared involvement in the day to day running of our family, as well as maintaining his extracurricular involvement in junior community sporting activities.

While I don't expect special treatment, nor that he should be able to jump the queue, I share his disillusionment. It is disappointing that the employment process cannot take account of the individual circumstances which I believe set my husband apart from your average new graduate who is more likely to be younger, single, childless, perhaps with more flexible family and community ties, and who is therefore in a better position to either travel long distances for daily work or to move out of Sydney altogether.

Indeed my own personal experience with the public education system has been marked with some disillusionment. I graduated initially as a primary educator but moved fairly quickly, via retraining, to secondary education in search of permanent employment. Having spent a number of years teaching at a high school in western Sydney I have since been employed in a private school where I currently hold a promotions position. As previously stated, I believe it would be an unfortunate loss to public education if my husband were to follow a similar path.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter and hope that a review of current employment processes might allow for better recognition of the individual merit of new graduates rather than merely their place on the list.

Yours faithfully,

Jennifer Mater
BA DipEd. Macq.

COPY

Dr A. Laughlin
Deputy Director-General
NSW Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 33
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Dr Laughlin,

Yesterday I had the pleasure of attending my husband's graduation ceremony at which you delivered the occasional address. I wonder if you were aware that at the same time as they listened to your inspirational words, many of those keen graduates had already experienced much disillusionment and disappointment with regard to their employment prospects.

A few years ago, my husband David responded to the campaign exhorting people to "teach and make a difference". Accordingly, with the support of the family, but not without some significant costs, he left his job in the finance industry and embarked on a course of study which has now earned him a second degree and qualified him to teach students from K-6.

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As you quite rightly suggested in your address through the use of a very apt quote, each graduate should "believe in fate, but lean forward so fate can see you". We believed, perhaps somewhat naively, that through his efforts my husband had in fact already leant forward. Perhaps you could consider this correspondence to constitute a slightly further lean.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter and hope that a review of current employment processes might allow for better recognition of the individual merit of new graduates rather than merely their place on the list.

Yours faithfully,

Jennifer Mater
BA DipEd Macq.

COPY



NEW SOUTH WALES

**DEPUTY PREMIER
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

RML 04/3056

Dear Ms Mater

I refer to your letter dated 20 April 2004, regarding your husband's permanent employment as a teacher.

In accordance with staffing procedures, teacher vacancies are filled initially by permanent teachers with priority for transfer. Where there are no teachers seeking priority transfer, vacancies are filled from a mix of service transfers, recruitment programs such as the *Graduate Recruitment Program* and the *Permanent Employment Program*, and from teachers seeking employment.

Factors that influence when a teacher receives a permanent appointment include the school's curriculum needs, the teacher's accreditation and areas of expertise, the geographic location in which the teacher is prepared to work and their priority date for employment.

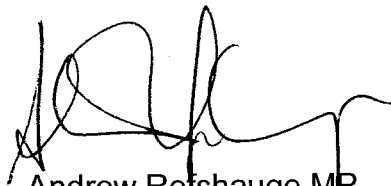
The work of temporary and casual teachers is vital in maintaining the quality and continuity of the delivery of educational programs to students in NSW government schools. Casual and temporary teaching engagements are recognised with a teacher's priority date for permanent employment enhanced through participation in the *Teacher Employment Priority Scheme*.

While there is a shortfall of teachers in some specific teaching areas in government secondary schools, particularly mathematics, science and technological and applied studies, there is a more than adequate supply of primary teachers in all areas of the State.

Ms Joyce Aitkins, Coordinator of Teacher Staffing, contacted your husband on 12 May 2004 and explained staffing procedures for filling vacant classroom teacher positions in schools and the difficulty in being able to predict when a suitable vacancy will occur. Ms Aitkins has encouraged your husband to review and update his special aptitudes and areas of expertise codes and his preference list for employment.

Should you or your husband require any further information or assistance,
you may wish to contact Ms Aitkins on telephone number (02) 9836 9605.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Refshauge', written over a horizontal line.

Andrew Refshauge MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education and Training
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

- 9 JUN 2004