

**Submission
No 4**

INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Organisation:

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Theme:

Summary

The Premier's Pyhrric Victory; or, You Reap What You Sow.

The current climate within the NSW teaching profession, which has culminated in the (then) Education Minister (now treasurer) asking for a committee enquiry into teacher recruitment and retention, can trace its genesis to the confrontational attitude adopted by the Premier towards teachers.

Since his election in 1996, the Premier has felt it politically expedient to be seen as “standing up to” the NSW Teachers Federation. While such attacks certainly play (or rather played) well in the media, and in the early stages of his premiership gave the premier what some could interpret as “victories”, such victories are becoming increasingly Pyhrric.

Increasingly, teachers – both current and prospective – are deciding the teaching profession (at least in NSW) is becoming a less and less attractive option. With many countries recruiting Australian teachers, coupled with an aging teaching force within NSW, it could be assumed that the Premier and his government would be working attract – and retain – teachers. By contrast, he is maintaining his confrontational attacks, rendering attempts to attract new staff, and retain existing staff, as ineffective.

The disdain and contempt of the Premier has been manifested in many ways. One could look to the Premier's vitriol during the salaries campaign of the late 1990s, and subsequent campaigns. One could look to the fines the Education Department has been issued for Occupational Health and Safety law breaches, and the Department's attitude that the fines are cheaper than making schools a safe place to teach. One could look to the Department's workers compensation payouts. One could look to the constant changes being made to syllabuses, and the refusal to provide adequate resources or professional development for teachers expected to implement those changes (including, for example, the department's refusal to provide copies of changed syllabuses to all staff who are expected to teach those syllabuses). One could look to the increased casualisation of the teaching workforce. One could look to the running down of the physical environment within schools.

Regardless of where one looks, the pattern remains the same. A premier, supported by a succession of complicit Education Ministers, looking to the short-term benefits running down the public education system and vilifying its teachers, ignoring the longer-term consequences of such actions.

The end result is the situation NSW currently finds itself in. A high resignation rate among beginning teachers, difficulties recruiting sufficient teaching staff, and a rapidly aging residual teaching staff.

While this outcome may not have been the Premier's intention when adopting his confrontational attitude towards teachers, it is the inevitable result. The Premier is now reaping what he has sown.

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