

**INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

As a teacher in the Central West I have seen the shortage of qualified and experienced teachers creeping Eastwards from the remote West of NSW over the past 15 years. The hardest to staff schools are always the ones that miss out first. The kids that need the most support are the ones most likely not to get it. This alone entrenches inequality of opportunity. The shortage hit Bathurst and Orange about 5 years ago. As a head teacher in a private school we were lucky because we could always offer permanent full-time roles to the best teachers that applied. We didn't miss out. It was the public schools that could only offer temporary contracts. It is ludicrous that roles can't be filled because someone has taken a year or two leave without pay knowing they can waltz back into a role regardless of their performance. No wonder new teachers are frustrated and just leave when they work twice as hard and still have to wait anxiously to see if they will have a gig for the next year. Just stop it.

Student behaviour is also a vexed question. What comes first - disengaged students or frustrated teachers? Students have a right to learn without their peers being attention seeking muppets without any real consequences. The options for discipline are limited and then the few there get whittled away. No wonder teachers leave when they spend most of their time dealing with behaviour rather than teaching and that with one hand tied behind their back. Disadvantaging students who want to learn by insisting trouble makers are integrated into each class is counter productive. It wouldn't be tolerated in a workplace (which is where most students will end up) so why is it tolerated in schools?

These two factors (amongst other) contribute to teaching being less attractive to aspiring teachers. And the notion of the "Best and Brightest" is misguided. Where are the teachers who struggled at school and had to work hard to get through? There are lots of students like that in schools but they are not going to be teachers themselves. I've worked with some teachers who were shearers, farm hands, mechanics and bankers before they took up roles as Science, Maths and HSIE teachers. And they could relate to kids.

It's not about money. There is plenty of money in the system. Class sizes aren't an issue. Respect teachers, reduce admin overhead, reduce management staff and start trusting teachers. The registration process has only seen experienced teachers choose to leave rather than submit to an unnecessary process that just keeps getting changed.

And for goodness sake start trusting what teachers say. Having department talking heads saying there isn't a shortage is just waving a red rag to a bull. You just confirm you aren't listening when you send people out to say that. And then more people give up.

If this isn't a complete waste of time and something just to placate teachers then consider the following:

Trust teachers and what they say as a starting point.

Reduce or eliminate admin overheads

Give good teachers, especially new teachers, permanent jobs

Insist on strong standards of behaviour from students and reward those that do show respect. The world has consequences and kids need to learn this.