

Submission
No 97

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am a public Secondary Teacher in South Western Sydney. I am currently in my fourth year of my teaching career. I am burn out and considering leaving a profession I had so much passion and drive for.

Our government and Education Minister have no concept of the true nature of teaching as a profession. I wouldn't expect them to, they haven't spent the time at university studying for an education degree, nor have they spent time in a classroom. Photo opportunities do not count. I'm talking about real time in a school, in a classroom with real staff and students.

Yet these are the people making decisions about our profession and it's crushing the quality of education. University educated teachers KNOW that a teacher is one of the most significant impacts in a child's education whilst at school. However, we are not provided the capacity to do our jobs and this is driving teachers out of the classroom.

This is a snapshot of what my day can look like and has looked like this year:

- I arrive at work at least an hour before staff are "required" to be at school.
- I get started into my emails as there are a number of emails that have been sent throughout the night. I work as a Transition Advisor as well as a classroom teacher so I am responding to parents, employers, external organisations and students in terms of providing effective transition support for our most disengaged students.
- I review my timetable for the day and I am on for 4 out of our 5 period day. I review that I have all the materials needed for my lessons that day. I realise that the teacher I am sharing my classes with has been sick, and so I walk over to her desk to find the cover sheets of the last lessons to confirm where in the program the students are up to.
- I realise my students were on minimal supervision the last lesson they were supposed to have in English, not the first time this has happened. I go back to my office and adjust my lessons, knowing that I will need to redo the original lesson as these students won't have a clear understanding of the skills and concept needed to prepare them for their assessment if I don't.
- I check our daily organisation sheet and see that the one admin period I did have for that day has been replaced with a class cover. Not only a class cover, but I'm actually on minimal supervision to supervise two classes outside at the same time. The classes are a Stage 5 Timber class and Stage 4 Japanese class, neither of which I have training in. I see the Head Teachers for these subjects, and am provided with booklets for the students to work through as the classes are taking place outside and do not have access to technology.
- I review the students Personalised Learning and Support Plans and find that at least 1/3 of the students in each class have been flagged as requiring additional support in teaching and learning in the classroom. Unfortunately I don't have the capacity to provide all of the support in an outside setting and increased student load, guess I will make do.
- Right before roll call I receive a phone call that there is a parent who would like to discuss concerns about their child with me. Unfortunately I am about to go to roll call so I advise the parent that I will try to call them back later.
- During roll call I see a student on their phone, which goes against our school phone policy. I instruct this year 12 student to take the phone and check it in to the front office as per the schools policy. The year 12 student starts to argue and after I was able to deescalate the student, he finally complied. It's only just turned 9:00am at this point.
- The bell for assembly goes and I go down to assembly with other staff and students. I am also the Year 11 Year Advisor so I assist our nominated Head Teacher in checking student uniform and monitoring student behaviour. I see a few of my year 11 students chewing gum and talking while the principal is making an announcement. When I go to address the students, I realise that the normal assembly line teachers for these classes are out sick today, so I can no longer assist the

year group as I am monitoring and dealing with 3 classes of year 11 students unsupervised on assembly.

- Period 1 bell goes and I go to the first classroom to pick up students, then the second classroom to pick up students to take them to our outdoor space. It is winter and it is very cold so these students although compliant, are not focussed on their work. They are focussed on the weather and I don't blame them. The students ask me questions about their booklets and I cannot provide the answers as I am not trained in either Japanese or Timber. I tell them to do their best, ask each other for help or skip to the next activity they can complete. I would try and google an answer for them but the boys at the back of the outdoor space are now playing cards instead of doing their assigned work. In the midst of 52 students in total asking for help/ questions, I am unable to get to their behaviour before the bell goes.

- Period 2 goes and I go to my normal scheduled class. I have a senior class now which is great, because this class is small and I can support them much more effectively. I have 2 new students in my class so while my others are working beautifully, I set these 2 students up with what they need to complete and catch up on. I turn around and one of my students has just started crying in class. I have no idea where it came from as she was happy and engaged in conversation with me when I walked in to the classroom. I look at her attendance on our staff portal and see her attendance has been falling lately. Unfortunately the counsellor is not onsite today and our student support officer is sick. Our Head Teacher of Well-being is also currently covering a minimal supervision period of 2 classes. I manage both this student and the class as best as I can as I don't want to leave the student distressed, but I know this is taking away time from teaching my class.

- One of my emails I got reminded me this morning that our faculty has duty supervision according to our roster. As a number of people have left teaching this year as well as staff being sick, we have had to close off many areas including play areas for students as we just don't have the numbers to supervise that many spaces.

- I go to my duty area and towards the end of my duty, 2 of my year 11 boys find me to tell me they saw a Year 7 boy bullying Year 7 girls in an area where teachers couldn't see. The told him to stop and then came and found me straight away which I'm very grateful for.

- I go to my Period 3 class and set the students up in their lesson. I really need to pee at this point but I can't leave my class and there are no teachers available to come cover so I will hold it until the second break. I ask one of the students in my class to grab those two year 11 boys from another class and bring them here so I can get them to write incident reports so I can follow up the incident at break time. All student were very compliant and were able to identify who the student was and what he specifically said. I send a report to the Year 7 Advisor and Senior executive with details of the incident reports so they can investigate further.

- I have another class now for Period 4 so I swap the material that I'm using for a new lesson. Unfortunately the students are not complying, despite following the same routine as normal. This is the first time these students have not complied with my instructions so instead of teaching we start the transition process into the classroom again until they are settled enough to engage in learning. Throughout the period I learn that there has been a friendship fallout so I am now shutting down unnecessary conversation and gossip and consistently redirecting students on task. A group of students fail to complete any of the tasks set in the period and are kept back for detention. Thankfully, they completed their assigned tasks in detention as I'm not always this lucky, some students require further intervention for their behaviour.

- It is now second break and I go to the bathroom as I have not been since I left the house just before 7am. It is now 1:45pm.

- I get back to my office and I see a line of year 10, year 11 and year 12 students asking to see myself and my colleague as transition advisors to support them with their transiting and career goals. We try to help them in the brief time we have left of break. I apologise for eating in front of them as if I don't eat now, I won't get another chance today. Thankfully they students have no problem with that at all.

- Period 5 starts and I teach my class. Thankfully, another small senior class and today's lesson ran really smoothly.
- The bell goes for students to go home and I pack up the classroom, including replugging laptops back into their trolley as although the students did follow my instruction, there were a section of laptops there were still unplugged.
- I get back to my office and catch up on my referrals and emails that were sent through the day. I attempt to ring that parent that tried to call me before however I cannot get a hold of them. I'll email them to book in a time to meet or chat.
- I make the other phone calls I need to for the day to discuss students progress. Most parents don't pick up so I leave a voicemail outlining my call. I do reach one parent that I have serious concerns over the child's attendance at school. The parent informed me that they were aware of their child's low attendance and asked me to discuss with the child.
- I pack up my things and leave for the day as I've hit a mental and emotional burn out. I take some marking home with me to do tonight.
- After I have gotten home, gone to the gym and had dinner, I finish some paperwork I need to get done for my own professional learning and goals, as part of the required Professional Development Plan for teachers. I do a little bit of marking but I put it away after a while as I can feel that I'm not in a clear enough headspace to give my best feedback to students for their essays as I've used my mental bandwidth up for the day.

This is just a day. Some days I have more admin time, some days I'm on classes. What I do know is that every day I walk into school not quite knowing what will come in that day. What students may require my support more urgently than others, who may be distressed throughout the day, unscheduled meetings or calls that all take time.

I know every teacher's story is different. But I have seen multiple staff leave in just the first 6 months of this year alone and I know more are considering. I know of my teacher colleagues from other schools, even other systems, that are also burnt out and done. There are numerous parts of the job that I haven't even covered in a normal day, compliance, registrations, N-Determination Warnings, following up attendance, following up on well-being, providing evidence of support for students Personalised Learning and Support Plans, mandatory professional learning and more.

If you want to retain and invest good teachers into the teaching profession, you need to make the profession enticing. Stop blaming teachers when I know so many good teachers that are trying their absolute best to not drown in the staff shortages and also provide quality learning to their students. Stop denying that shortage isn't real when I seek multiple classes every week, sometimes daily, get collapsed under minimal supervision and staff having to take on extra work they are not getting paid for, regularly. Listen and work with industry professionals on strategies to grow numbers of good teachers in the profession so that our kids can get the quality education they deserve.

I don't want my name to be made public, I just want non-teachers in government to start getting some insight into how complex teaching has become and why the current job parameters are driving teachers away.