

Submission
No 112

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: AEU NSW Teachers Federation

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AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION
NEW SOUTH WALES TEACHERS FEDERATION BRANCH

SUBMISSION TO

Parliament of New South Wales
Portfolio Committee No. 3 Education

INQUIRY INTO

Inquiry into teacher shortages in New South Wales

Authorised by

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Executive Summary

Every child deserves a qualified teacher for every lesson, every day. It is their right and an essential part of the government's obligation to ensure the provision of public education of the highest quality in every community.

But children across NSW are being denied their right to qualified teachers because of severe and growing shortages. These shortages are affecting the quality of education provided in public and private schools. As renowned US academic Professor Linda Darling-Hammond has said, *"if you don't have a strong supply of well-prepared teachers, nothing else in education can work."*¹

Schools report the shortages are affecting the learning, well-being, and behaviour of students. In addition to the disruption of hundreds of classes, essential specialist learning programs are being collapsed on a daily basis to cover gaps and professional learning abandoned. The time and energy of the school executive is constantly diverted into the efforts to minimise the impact of the shortages, source scarce casuals and fill vacant positions.

Schools are increasingly forced to merge classes or provide only minimal supervision for students. Class sizes of 50 students or more have become commonplace. The shortages are disproportionately affecting students in the most disadvantaged areas in the state, where schools struggle most to fill vacant positions and attract experienced teachers.

The crutch the Government has long relied on to try to cover up the shortages is out of area teaching. Despite evidence this is impacting on student outcomes, the NSW Government has allowed this to increase to the point where more than one in four secondary teachers are teaching out of area. For teachers of children with disabilities, it is one in three.

Already unsustainable workloads have been exacerbated by the shortages, pushing teachers to breaking point. Seven out of 10 teachers say they are reconsidering their future in the profession because of the workload. If not addressed, teacher burnout threatens to dramatically increase the exodus of teachers from the profession.

COVID and winter illnesses are not causing the shortages. They are just making a bad situation worse, exposing the long-term failures of the NSW Government in managing teacher supply.

The Government has ignored its own research showing the decline in the attractiveness of the profession and growing attrition rates relate directly to unsustainable workloads and uncompetitive salaries.

At every turn it, has sought to conceal evidence about the cause and scale of the shortages and the inadequacy of the solutions it now promotes. The extent of the denials extends to the Education Minister Sarah Mitchell even refusing to acknowledge that there are teacher shortages, contradicting the briefings and research provided by the Department of Education (DoE) and, more recently, the statements of the Premier. The NSW Government cannot, or will not, even provide the most basic information about how many teachers are required a year past 2025.

The Government has also chosen a low road approach through a Teacher Supply Strategy that relies on watering down qualification requirements for teachers and expensive long-shot programs that

¹ Spector, C, 'Research stories', Stanford Graduate School of Education, July 2019
<<https://ed.stanford.edu/news/if-you-don-t-have-strong-supply-well-prepared-teachers-nothing-else-education-can-work>>

will, at best, deliver a tiny fraction of the teachers NSW needs. Instead of making the profession more attractive, the Government just wants to make it **look** more attractive through marketing and advertising.

Failing to fix the fundamental problems of salaries and workloads renders the Government's strategy expensive and inadequate. In nine months, the \$125 million Teacher Supply Strategy did not deliver a single teacher.

With an ageing workforce, declining university enrolments and rising school student enrolments there is a serious risk that the shortages will only worsen if the Government does not address the primary causes of them.

There are predictions of a 15 per cent shortfall of Catholic teachers in 2030 and a similar gap in public schools.

A failure to act now risks failing generations of students and teachers.

Teacher shortages – a long-term problem

The current staffing crisis has been decades in the making. What we have seen is a steady increase in the number of schools that are difficult to staff and the subjects where demand does not match supply.

In 2004, the NSW DoE reported “*chronic shortfalls*” of maths and science teachers in NSW. In maths the problems were statewide. There were also issues recruiting sufficient English, Technology and special education teachers.²

In PISA 2015, almost 20 per cent of students in NSW were in schools where the principal reported a lack of teaching staff. The schools most affected by the shortages across the country were the most disadvantaged. A greater reported shortage of staff was reflected in lower levels of performance, making clear the connection between staffing and results.³

The NSW DoE’s 2015 Teaching Workforce Supply and Demand report warned there was an adequate supply of secondary teachers, “*except in the areas of Mathematics, Science with Physics, some subjects in Technological and Applied Studies, some specialist teachers and some specific subjects in particular geographical locations*”. It added: “*There is a decreasing supply of Mathematics teachers affecting all areas of the State. Any increase in retirement rates above current projected levels and to a lesser extent an increase in resignation rates would have a substantial negative impact on the total net supply of Mathematics teachers.*” A declining supply of Technological and Applied Studies teachers was projected to grow faster from 2016. “*Possible shortages include Engineering Science, Industrial Technology and combinations of subjects such as Food Technology with Textiles Technology*”.⁴

A series of internal reports from the DoE in 2019 and 2020 raised the alarm about teacher shortages and the impact they were having on student achievement. A 2019 report warned of declining number of graduate entrants and increased enrolments and stated: “*Insufficient teacher supply is a critical risk to improved student outcomes, both now and in the future.*”⁵ A confidential Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy in January 2020 said there were severe shortages in key learning areas and locations leading to longer-term vacancies in rural and remote areas, special education and STEM subjects. It stated that 91 per cent of metropolitan, regional and rural secondary schools had at least one vacant role.⁶

In February 2020, Ms Mitchell admitted the shortages were so bad they were keeping her awake at night. “*I recognise there are issues with teacher shortages across the state. It’s pronounced in regional and regional areas, but I hear it from teachers based in the city as well.*”⁷

² Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia, 2004, p132

³ Thomson, S, De Bortoli, L and Underwood, C, PISA 2015: Reporting Australia’s results, 2017. See tables 8.9 and 8.10 and p261.

⁴ NSW Department of Education, 2015 Teaching Workforce Supply and Demand, <<https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/en/home/teach-nsw/2015-Workforce-Supply-and-Demand-Aug-2015.pdf>>

⁵ NSW Department of Education, Workforce modelling and teacher supply, November 2019

⁶ NSW Department of Education, Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy, January 2020, <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/rapid_teacher_strategy.pdf>

⁷ Chrysanthos, N, Singhal, P, Hunter, F, ‘Boost incentives for rural teachers, say education sector leaders’, Sydney Morning Herald, February 2020 <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/boost-incentives-for-rural-teachers-say-education-sector-leaders-20200220-p542qy.html#_blank>

A June 2020 DoE report warned there could be a shortfall of 2425 teachers by 2025: *“We cannot improve student outcomes without having a sufficient supply of high-quality teachers available where and when they are needed. If we don’t address supply gaps now, we will run out of teachers in the next five years.”*⁸

In December 2020, the DoE’s Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) was blunt about teacher shortages in its evaluation of the failed Local Schools, Local Decisions policy (LSLD), stating that *“the system still does not meet the staffing needs of schools”*.⁹

“In interviews, principals often said they were not able to hire staff to meet specific student needs, as LSLD was intended to allow, as suitable candidates were simply not available; or that the flexibility that the policy promoted was not matched by adequate practical measures,” the evaluation states. *“For small and non-metropolitan schools in particular, specialist staff, such as counsellors or specialised subject teachers in particular, remained very difficult to access.”*

In 2021, the DoE’s internal advice continued to warn about the growing shortages that were affecting schools and students across NSW. But the Minister’s public acknowledgements of the scale of the problems were replaced by denials. In answering a Question on Notice from Labor MLC Courtney Houssos, in February 2021, Ms Mitchell said there was no shortage of physics teachers in NSW.¹⁰ This was despite internal DoE estimates in 2020 that out-of-area teaching of physics was affecting as many as 13 per cent of year 7-10 classes.¹¹ In April 2021, a ministerial briefing repeated the words of the 2015 Supply and Demand Report: *“Currently there is an adequate aggregate supply of teachers, except in the areas of mathematics, science with physics, some subjects in technological and applied studies, some specialist teaching areas and some particular locations.”*¹²

In June 2021, the DoE warned the Minister and the Secretary that shortages of full-time and casual teachers were worsening, and the DoE was already short more than 800 STEM teachers, leading to widespread out-of-area teaching. *“STEM qualified teacher shortages could affect as many as 70,000 students each year by 2030,”* the briefing stated.¹³

Just weeks later in early July 2021, a DoE briefing for Ms Mitchell stated: *“NSW is facing a large and growing shortage of teachers in specialisations such as STEM and inclusive education, in rural and regional areas and secondary.”*¹⁴ In the same month, the Member for Tamworth Kevin Anderson warned of a *“critical shortage”* of teachers in the Education Minister’s home town of Gunnedah.¹⁵

⁸ NSW Department of Education, Exec Priority Boost Supply of High Quality Teachers, June 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/exec_priority_boost_supply_of_high_quality_teachers.pdf>

⁹ Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Local Schools, Local Decisions, Evaluation final report, Department of Education, December 2020 <<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/cese/publications/cese-evaluations/local-schools-local-decisions-evaluation>>

¹⁰ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council Response to Question on Notice No. 3866, February 2021 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/ganda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=84806>>

¹¹ NSW Department of Education, Workforce Supply & Demand & Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy, March 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/workforce_supply_and_demand_and_rapid_teacher_supply_strategy.pdf>

¹² NSW Department of Education, Briefing for the minister – staffing shortages and over-establishment teachers, April 23, 2021.

¹³ NSW Department of Education, 2022 school staffing, June 2021 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/r_gipa-21-886_-_released_records_staffing.pdf>

¹⁴ NSW Department of Education, Briefing for Education Ministers Meeting: 2 July 2021, <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/gipa_july_briefing_to_minister.pdf>

¹⁵ Gunnedah Times, ‘Teacher Housing boost’, July 1, 2021 p2

However, in the same month, the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, representing Ms Mitchell, responded to a Question on Notice about teacher shortages by denying they existed. *“The Department of Education currently has, and will maintain, an adequate supply of teachers to meet the needs of the New South Wales school system.”*¹⁶

In October 2021, Ms Mitchell claimed *“there is no teacher shortage in NSW”*¹⁷, a line regularly repeated by spokespeople for the DoE.

It is only in recent months the Premier Dominic Perrottet has acknowledged the shortages as a significant problem, saying in May: *“As we move through this next period, we know very well that there are significant challenges in relation to labour shortages, not just in teaching but also in health.”*¹⁸

Current shortages of full-time and casual teachers

Federation polling has tracked the worsening full-time and casual teacher shortages in public schools, exacerbated in 2022 by COVID-19, teacher burnout and illness.

In a survey of more than 4000 members conducted in August and September 2021, 70 per cent of members said the teacher shortages were a very significant issue in public schools and 25 per cent said they were a significant issue. Asked the same question in March/April 2022, 89 per cent of members said that the teacher shortages were a very significant issue and 10 per cent said they were a significant issue. In the 2022 survey of more than 10,000 members, 97 per cent said their school had difficulty recruiting enough casual teachers.¹⁹

In response to a question in the 2022 survey about their personal experiences, members said the shortages had led to higher workloads, less preparation time and professional learning, a reduction in available programs and curriculum offerings, increases in class sizes, delays in students getting specialist support along with a decline in student and staff morale, student discipline and attendance. Principals and executive team members were engaged in a constant struggle to reorganise classes and programs as well as try to source scarce casuals and fill vacant permanent and temporary and other short-term positions, taking up hours a day.

Teachers said:

“I have been sick for 3 weeks and my year 9 class has had only two lessons with a teacher in that time.”

“Senior classes regularly in the library, unsupervised because the librarian is covering junior classes. I personally take a minimum of two extra classes a week. DP (Deputy Principal) unavailable to assist as he is often taking classes. Principal also taking a class and often unavailable.”

¹⁶ Lee, G, NSW Legislative Assembly, Response to Question on Notice No. 6046 July, 2021

<<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=87548>>

¹⁷ Nichols, L, ‘Staff shortages and issues related to working conditions have resulted in local teachers taking industrial action to highlight their ongoing dispute with the NSW Government’, Singleton Argus October 27, 2021 <<https://www.singletonargus.com.au/story/7486922/singleton-teachers-industrial-action/>>

¹⁸ Perrottet, D, NSW Legislative Assembly, Response to Question without Notice, May 18, 2022

<<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-124997/link/66>>

¹⁹ NSW Teachers Federation, Member surveys, August/September 2021 and March/April 2022, unpublished.

"We are only keeping our shit together because we don't want to let our students down any more than they have been. Students miss up to 4 out of 6 lessons per day because we can't get casual staff to cover."

"We have been flying casual staff from Sydney and Tamworth to Dubbo. Flying them! Just so we can put a body in front of a class for a few days before they head back home."

"We are all volunteering to cover as many classes as possible to stop students from missing out further, but it is completely unsustainable."

"Students are stressed and are refusing to follow basic expectations. Regular staff are absent on sick leave, students then run circles around casual teachers. Then there's more aggressive and chaotic behaviours, then HTs (Head Teachers) and DP (Deputy Principal) are under the pump trying to deal with behaviour."

"On Monday we had 35 classes on minimal supervision and a number of senior classes not covered at all. I have been trying to fill 2 temp positions in my faculty - no one is applying for these. In 18 years this is the worst I've seen it in a school based on the northern beaches – my colleagues at other schools share the same experience. It's everywhere."

"At my school this year, every faculty had vacancies, which meant almost every teacher was overloaded."

"I have been teaching two (2) classes of severely physically and mentally impaired students in an SSP school alone for over 50% of term 1 in 2022 due to staff shortages."

"The impact is insane -- this year has almost broken me and many of my colleagues. If we are lucky we have 4 staff to replace up to 18 teachers off – there is no relief and every day it is chaos."

"We have no choice but to have our LaST (Learning and Support Teacher) and COVID ILSP (Intensive Learning Support) teachers, Deputy and Principal cover any day to day absences – even then, we have needed to merge classes, send classes to the library for minimal supervision or plead with Head Teachers and other staff to take on extra classes. On days with multiple absences, we have need to do all of these things, just to have someone supervising students."

"Only 1 counsellor available 2 days a week for 1000 students."

"The Maths classes I was covering have had 20 odd different teachers this term, been supervised in the playground or hall with others and have 'booklet fatigue' as this is all they have been doing without any real teaching."

"My classes sometimes disappear if I am a minute late because they are so accustomed to finding their class has no teacher."

"On average 3.5 hours a day is spent finding, allocating and spreading thin casuals. Some days have peaked to 6 hours of time sourcing casuals that have little to no experience in the KLA (Key Learning Area) assigned."

"Have advertised for a TAS teacher at least 4 times -- special \$20,000 bonus has kicked in and still unable to fill. We currently have multiple permanent and temporary positions that we are trying to fill. No one in the department seems to care."

A principal stated: "I have a full-time position that I have been advertising for over the last 2 years, and still unable to get any applicants."

A year 11 student was so concerned by the shortages he wrote to his local MP, Member for Cessnock Clayton Barr, who read out his letter in Parliament.²⁰ The letter states: *“Today for example (Monday 2/5/22), we did not have a teacher organised to teach us in THREE out of six classes. How can it be that in my senior and most important years of schooling, I am left without not only quality teaching, but without any teaching at all for 50% of my scheduled lessons? It has now gotten to a point where teachers are volunteering to supervise classes, even when they are already supervising another class, with NO financial benefits.”*

A western Sydney principal said in May she could not effectively staff her school where 98 per cent of students come from a language background other than English.

“I can’t find enough English as an additional language or dialect teachers for students struggling to learn English. I can’t find enough COVID Intensive learning and support teachers for students who fell behind during the pandemic. I can’t find enough casual or temporary teachers to give staff the preparation time they need. Before the day even starts, we do not have enough staff to run our programs effectively. You then have teachers away and can’t get casuals to cover them so our specialist staff, curriculum instructors and our off-class executive have to collapse and cancel their programs and jump on classes.”²¹

The reduction in casual teacher numbers

A lack of casual teachers is affecting almost every school in NSW. Despite increasing public school enrolments, DoE figures show casual teacher numbers dropped by 20 per cent from 2012 to 2021 (5729 to 4557).²²

A DoE 2022 staffing report identified the supply of casuals as one of the three immediate teacher supply challenges stating: *“Shortages in casual teachers are worsening as a result of COVID ILSP and changes in sick leave patterns; this lessens support for short term and unplanned leave and can impact broader provision e.g. compressed classes.”²³*

DoE secretary Georgina Harrison said in June that removing requirements for COVID vaccinations would allow 965 active casual staff to return to working in school along with those who resigned or were terminated for not complying with the mandate. But, underlining the extent of the shortages, she said the removal of the vaccination mandate *“would have little impact on the current staffing stress the sector was experiencing”*.²⁴

²⁰ Barr, C, Cessnock Electorate Teachers, May 10, 2022 <<https://claytonbarr.com.au/cessnock-electorate-teachers-10-may-2022/>>

²¹ Proctor, M, Speech to NSWTF rally, May 4, 2022

²² Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Response to Question on Notice No. 8523, 12 April 2022, <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=91070>>

²³ Department of Education, 2022 school staffing, released in GIPA 21-886, <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/r_gipa-21-886_-_released_records_staffing.pdf>

²⁴ NSW Department of Education, ‘NSW Education proposes change to vaccine mandate’, June 4, 2022 <<https://education.nsw.gov.au/news/latest-news/nsw-education-proposes-change-to-vaccine-mandate>>

The use of non-school-based teachers, students and other staff

The DoE has deployed into schools more than 1600 non-school-based teaching and corporate staff, who are accredited to teach, and 2600 final year university students, who have been granted interim teaching approval for casual and temporary teaching.²⁵

The DoE has compromised high professional standards by the manner in which it redeployed non-school-based teachers to schools. In recent decades, the NSW public school system has endured multiple departmental restructures and realignments, austerity measures and policy failures such as Local Schools, Local Decisions and, more recently, the School Success Model, which have stripped out important systemic programs and support provided by the non-school-based teachers. Consequently, in 2022, non-school-based teachers within the DoE's structures have been given an impossible task: to provide meaningful support for the work of schools without the necessary personnel, resources and conditions, and to be ready to be deployed to cover classes.

University students are also being asked to teach in complex classrooms without adequate preparation or support. Already concerns have been raised that this leaves the students vulnerable to burnout and a premature end to their teaching career, exacerbating the shortages in future years.²⁶

More than one quarter of people involved in the COVID intensive learning program are not teachers, because of the shortages. The list of those employed to deliver this vital support includes university students, academics, Allied Health Professionals and Student Learning Support Officers.²⁷

Vacant teaching positions

The number of vacant permanent teaching positions in NSW public schools has fluctuated in the past 18 months from a low of 995 in June 2021 to a high of over 3000 in October and November 2021.²⁸ These numbers have been trending up for a decade from the 568 vacant permanent positions recorded by the DoE in 2012 and the 544 recorded in 2013.²⁹

In December 2021, the NSW Government released a list of 70 schools that had more than 20 per cent of their full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher entitlement vacant. That list included small schools with vacancy rates of up to 90 per cent along with larger schools such as Inner Sydney High School (23.4 per cent vacant), South West Rocks Public School (26.75 per cent vacant) and recently opened

²⁵ Burley, E, 'NSW considers fly-in fly-out teachers to plug regional shortage', The Saturday Telegraph, June 4, 2022 <<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/education-new-south-wales/nsw-considers-flyin-flyout-teachers-to-plug-regional-shortage/news-story/470b5297147194b729ba559f6116bd03>>

²⁶ Morrison, C, Bentley, B, Clifton, J, Ledger, S, 'Growing numbers of unqualified teachers are being sent into classrooms – this is not the way to fix the teacher shortage', The Conversation, July 22, 2022 <<https://theconversation.com/growing-numbers-of-unqualified-teachers-are-being-sent-into-classrooms-this-is-not-the-way-to-fix-the-teacher-shortage-186379>>

²⁷ Mitchell, S, Answers to Questions on Notice, Portfolio Committee No. 3, Education Received September 27, 2021, pdf, p5

²⁸ Mitchell, S, Answers to Questions on Notice, Portfolio Committee No. 3 Education, Received November 30, 2021, p9 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/16414/Answers%20to%20QON%20-%20Hon.%20Sarah%20Mitchell%20MPP,%20Education%20-%20Received%2030%20Nov%202021.pdf>>

²⁹ NSW Department of Education, Education – Key Facts, July/August 2020. Tabled in Portfolio Committee No. 3 Education, March 2021. <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/14238/2.%20Bundle%20of%20documents%20titled%20Education%20%E2%80%93%20key%20facts.pdf>>

Barramurra Public School in Oran Park (43.29 per cent vacant). In far western NSW, Walgett Community College High had 42.45 per cent of positions vacant and Wilcannia Central School had 55.63 per cent of positions vacant.³⁰

The most recent available DoE figures show 1657.7 FTE permanent positions were vacant across NSW public schools on 10 June, 2022.³¹ This represents a 67 per cent increase on the 995 recorded on 30 June, 2021.³² More than 40 per cent of schools had at least one vacancy.

The DoE figures (below) for June show high numbers of vacancies in country schools and also in city schools in higher SES areas, which have traditionally been the easiest to staff.

Vacant permanent positions

| School name | Vacant positions FTE |
|---|----------------------|
| Chester Hill High School | 18 |
| Dubbo College, Delroy campus | 12 |
| Walgett Community College High | 10 |
| Plumpton High School | 9 |
| Bennett Road Public School | 9 |
| Epping Public School | 8 |
| Northern Beaches Secondary College, Cromer Campus | 8 |
| Killara High School | 8 |

Time to fill vacant positions

The NSW Government has tried to cover up the length of time vacancies take to fill. Ms Mitchell in July 2021 refused to say how many positions were vacant for more than two months. *“The Department of Education is unable to provide the data on when individual positions were vacated and then declared vacant, as this would require manually sourcing each of the requisitions.”*³³

But internal DoE documents show the time taken to fill vacant positions is collected and closely monitored. The 2020 confidential Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy said critical supply gaps were being exacerbated by longer times to fill roles, particularly in rural areas. Vacancies (below) were taking up to a year to fill with the average by operational directorate between 3.6 and 4.1 months.³⁴

³⁰ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Answer to Question on Notice No. 7957, December 24, 2021 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=90102>>

³¹ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Answer to Question on Notice, No. 8916, NSW Legislative Council, June 29, 2022 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=92058>>

³² Department of Education, Teacher Supply Strategy, October 2021.

³³ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Answer to Question on Notice No. 6743, July 2021 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=87884>>

³⁴ NSW Department of Education, Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy, January 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/rapid_teacher_strategy.pdf>

Average time to fill vacancies

| Operational directorate | Months |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Metropolitan north | 3.8 |
| Metropolitan south | 4 |
| Regional north | 3.6 |
| Regional south | 3.9 |
| Rural north | 4.1 |
| Rural south and west | 4.1 |

An April 2022, the DoE vacancy report shows, in the schools with the highest vacancies, some positions are taking more than six months to fill.³⁵

April 2022 – Vacancies per school

| | Vacancies | < 3 months | 3 to 6 months | Older than 6 months |
|---|-----------|------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Chester Hill High School | 12 | 10 | 1 | 1 |
| Dubbo College, Delroy Campus | 11 | 8 | 0 | 3 |
| Walgett Community College High | 10 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| Karabar High School | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Northern Beaches Secondary College, Cromer campus | 8 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| Riverbank Public School | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Bulli Public School | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Chatswood High School | 7 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Cranebrook High School | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Dubbo College, South Campus | 7 | 4 | 3 | 0 |

The NSW Government has repeatedly referred to the number of vacant permanent teaching positions as evidence that there is no problem with teacher shortages. But it constantly misrepresents this data, referring to the number of vacant permanent positions as a proportion of the overall workforce, rather than just of the permanent workforce.

This omits the fact that permanent teachers now make up less than two thirds of teachers in NSW public schools.³⁶

While 30 per cent of teachers are temporary, there hasn't been data made available on vacant temporary positions across all schools.

A March 2022 briefing for the Minister showed temporary vacancies for schools in the Temora network. Figures for just three schools in one rural town within that network (below) show significant numbers of temporary vacancies and vacant positions.³⁷

³⁵ NSW Department of Education, Permanent Teacher Vacancy Dashboard, April 14, 2022.

³⁶ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Answer to Question on Notice No. 7501, October 8, 2021 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/ganda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=88661>>

³⁷ NSW Department of Education, Briefing for the Minister, Roundtable with Principals from the Temora Network, March 4, 2022.

Vacant positions in Young schools

| School | Staffing entitlement | Temporary vacancies | Vacant positions |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Young High School | 52.83 | 9 | 8 |
| Young North Public School | 23.70 | 5 | 5 |
| Young Public School | 30.5 | 5 | 5 |

Shortages of school counsellors

The number of school counsellors in public schools has repeatedly been found to be inadequate by inquiries including the Vinson inquiry (2002), the NSW Legislative Council inquiries into the education of students with disability (2010 and 2017) and the Gallop inquiry, which reported in February 2021. Each inquiry recommended a student to school counsellor ratio of 1:500 – a level that has still not been achieved, even with the employment of school psychologists who do not hold the same dual qualification as school counsellors.

With rising numbers of students experiencing trauma, behavioural and mental health issues, the lack of school counsellors remains an acute problem. Principals and teachers report a significant increase in mental health issues among students as a result of the pandemic along with unacceptably long waiting times for students to receive counsellor support.

This is compounded by difficulties filling vacant positions, leaving schools in many cases for months without access to a school counsellor. An internal DoE report from April this year shows 106 of the 1379 positions were vacant. Two thirds of the vacancies reported at that point were in regional and rural areas (below) where student needs are high and community services are limited.³⁸

School counselling vacancies by region

| Operational directorate | Vacancies |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Metropolitan North | 15 |
| Metropolitan South | 10 |
| Metropolitan South and West | 13 |
| Connected Communities | 6 |
| Regional North | 2 |
| Regional North and West | 15 |
| Regional South | 3 |
| Rural North | 17 |
| Rural South and West | 25 |

³⁸ NSW Department of Education, Current School Counselling Workforce and Vacancies, April 14, 2022.

Librarian shortages

Every school is provided with a teacher-librarian allocation, in accordance with the Teacher Staffing Entitlement. But a 2020 DoE internal report stated that half the public schools in NSW (1105) had unoccupied teacher-librarian positions.³⁹

Teacher shortages in private schools

Research conducted by the Independent Education Union NSW/ACT branch last year revealed widespread teacher shortages in Catholic schools across NSW. About 30 per cent of secondary schools had a temporary or permanent teacher vacancy with about 20 per cent of primary schools in the same situation.

The union said strategies being employed to manage the shortages included:

- merging classes, resulting in large class sizes
- cancelling the professional development of teachers so they could cover classes
- foregoing teachers' scheduled lesson planning time
- asking part-time teachers to reschedule non-work days
- asking support staff to supervise classes along with principals and assistant principals and teacher-librarians.⁴⁰

A recent report said the number of positions private high schools need to fill has more than doubled in two years with Maths and Physics the subject areas with the largest teacher shortages. In a national survey, conducted by the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA), about two thirds of principals said there were not enough Maths teachers to fill positions and 55 per cent reported shortages of Physics teachers. In addition, 42 per cent reported Design and Technology teacher shortages and one third said filling Chemistry and Language teaching positions was increasingly difficult. The Rosebank College principal said: *"I don't know a principal right now who isn't grappling with shortages. It's the worst I've seen it."*⁴¹

Merged classes and minimal supervision

The unacceptable practices of merged classes and minimal supervision are being used in high rates in schools due to shortages of full-time and casual teachers. Teachers and principals report this is now a daily practice in public and Catholic schools across the state with thousands of students affected.

The DoE claims it has no centralised data on merged classes or the times students are provided only minimal supervision, despite the increasing prevalence of these actions and the profound negative

³⁹ NSW Department of Education, Review of Unfilled Teacher Librarian Positions in NSW Schools, May 2020

⁴⁰ Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch, Drastic casual teacher drought causing chaos, Media Release, March 24, 2021

<https://www.ieu.asn.au/application/files/8116/1662/6751/IEU_media_release_Teacher_shortages_24Mar2021.pdf>

⁴¹ Carroll, L, 'The worst I've seen it: Job vacancies at private schools double', Sydney Morning Herald, July 4, 2022 <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/the-worst-i-ve-seen-it-job-vacancies-at-private-high-schools-double-20220622-p5avvy.html>>

consequences of them on teaching and learning. Its response has been to order principals and teachers not to release the data to parents or the public.⁴²

Ms Mitchell has provided to Parliament figures from a small number of individual schools in response to questions from MPs. The data reproduced in the table below is from the responses to Questions on Notice in February 2022⁴³ and June 2022⁴⁴ and shows the staggering scale of the teacher shortages in individual schools.

Instances of merged classes and minimal supervision

| | Minimal supervision 2021 | Merged classes 2021 | Minimal supervision 2022 | Merged classes 2022 | TOTAL |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Mudgee High School | 640 | 271 | 1637 | 293 | 2,841 |
| Armidale Secondary College | Fewer than 10 | | 203 | 166 | |
| Canobolas Rural Technology High School | 536 | 313 | 25 | 1,496 | 2,370 |
| Gunnedah High School | 105 | 66 | 20 | 206 | 397 |
| Murrumbidgee Regional High School | 698 | 251 | 416 | 222 | 1,587 |
| Narrabri High School | 77 | 257 | 142 | 68 | 544 |
| Dubbo College, Delroy Campus | 263 | 929 | 149 | 726 | 2,067 |
| Merriwa Central School | 704 | 2645 | 240 | 240 | 3,829 |
| Mary Brooksbank SSP | 0 | 131 | N/A | N/A | |
| Holroyd School SSP | 0 | 73 | N/A | N/A | |
| Orara High School | 299 | 165 | N/A | N/A | |
| Chester Hill High | 150 | 37 | N/A | N/A | |
| Great Lakes College, Forster Campus | 119 | 374 | N/A | N/A | |

Despite the provision of the figures in the table above, subsequent Questions on Notice requesting similar information in July 2022 for a significant number of metropolitan schools was not provided to Parliament.⁴⁵ The failure to provide figures in this instance was despite the fact the DoE had actively pursued and obtained it from school principals before the June 28 deadline.

⁴² Burley, E, 'Education Department tells schools not to reveal teacher shortage data', The Saturday Telegraph, May 28, 2022 <<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/education-department-tells-schools-not-to-reveal-teacher-shortage-data/news-story/53ca1287b7eec7d1194b43bc502aad6d>>

⁴³ Mitchell, S, Legislative Council Questions and Answers No. 685, 21 February 2022 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/hp/housepaper/18285/QuestionsAndAnswers-LC-685-20220221-Proof.pdf>>

⁴⁴ Mitchell, S, Legislative Council Questions and Answers No. 772, 29 June 2022 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/hp/housepaper/28620/QuestionsAndAnswers-LC-772-20220629-Proof.pdf>>

⁴⁵ Mitchell, S, Legislative Council Questions and Answers No. 793, 28 July 2022 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/hp/housepaper/28666/QuestionsAndAnswers-LC-793-20220728-Proof.pdf>>

The data table above show some of the schools have been required to merge classes or provide students with only minimal supervision on thousands of occasions.

However, information provided to Federation shows the published data (and that sought by the DoE for the purposes of responding to Questions and Answers Paper No. 793) underestimate the true number of uncovered classes.

Principals report they have been pressured to change their numbers to ensure they meet the definitions provided by the DoE, which aim to reduce the total numbers for both merged classes and minimal supervision.

Emails sent to schools in July from DoE officials requesting the figures, state that the request is for *“the number of times minimal supervision or merged classes occurred, NOT the number of classes/periods affected”*.

The examples provided show a double period that has only minimal supervision is to be treated as one instance not two. If three classes are merged, that is one occasion not three. If a class had an alternate teacher or non-school based teacher, it is not minimal supervision.

At Canobolas Rural Technology High School in Orange, internal records show there were 1118 merged or uncovered classes in term 1, 2022 and 947 merged or uncovered classes in term 2. That constitutes more than 2000 hours of classes that the school did not have teachers for in two terms. On one day, a single teacher was left to supervise 94 students from seven different classes.⁴⁶

At Dubbo College, Delroy Campus, there were no teachers for more than 1400 periods in term 1, according to internal records. Taking out the impact of COVID absences, there were still 1000 lessons lost at the school, which had 12 permanent teacher positions vacant in June. The shortages also forced the collapse of the support unit educating children with disability from eight (8) classes to six (6). Every period, every day there were multiple classes on minimal supervision on the school’s back oval. According to teachers, the largest group was 243 students, supervised by two teachers.

The teacher shortage also affected student activities planned beyond the school, prohibiting them participating in the Western Plains Science and Engineering Challenge, a reward day with Dr Karl for high-achieving students, representative sporting events and visiting the Tutankhamun Roadshow.

By mid-June in term 2, more than 1200 periods could not be staffed at Delroy. Merged classes of 50 students were commonplace and their number was significantly increased due to the weather preventing minimal supervision of large groups outside.

The shortages are affecting students of all ages, including those in their critical last year of school as they study for the HSC.

At one city high school where a teacher was asked to write down the impact of the shortages for a week in June, year 12 English classes were combined for four days in a row. On three of the four days, English standard classes were combined with English advanced classes with 56 students in each. Year 12 Engineering, Design and Technology classes were cancelled, and only minimal supervision provided to year 12 Physics and Maths classes.

⁴⁶ Silmalis, L, ‘\$400k Teach for Australia plan yet to recruit a single staff member’, The Saturday Telegraph, April 9, 2022 <<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/education-new-south-wales/400k-teach-for-australia-plan-yet-to-recruit-a-single-staff-member/news-story/9b50e007786526a455c28a9172de1bb0>>

In the same week in a disadvantaged Western Sydney primary school, class sizes were as large as 35 students. A university student taught a class at the school unsupervised. Children who fell behind during COVID lockdowns and those who need help to learn English were denied intensive support because no replacements were available for absent specialist teachers. A teacher at the school said on Tuesday of that week: *“Today was another day of difficult conversations having to tell staff that they were not getting the time outside the classroom they are entitled to for marking, administration and lesson planning or receiving specialist support for their students.”*

In a school in the eastern suburbs, a teacher reported struggling with 50 students. *“We have gone back to my original classroom where students are sitting on the floor as we don't have enough chairs/desks. Some are standing at the back of the classroom, but most are sitting in the aisles between tables. I cannot supervise a group of 50 students in a classroom designed for 25. I need help.”*

Out-of-area teaching

Teacher shortages have led to high levels of out-of-area teaching in public and private schools in NSW for many years. This means teachers are teaching subjects not included in their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) degree or another professional qualification.

The Coalition Government last year claimed it did not know the extent of out-of-area teaching. In response to a Question on Notice in October 2021, Ms Mitchell said the DoE was *“unable to provide a total figure of teachers who are teaching outside their area of expertise in secondary and public schools.”*⁴⁷

However, internal 2019 and 2020 DoE documents show it had collected detailed information on the prevalence of out-of-area teaching and also had research by CESE showing its negative impact on student achievement. In June 2020, a DoE report estimated 109,000 secondary students were being taught by out of area teachers. It stated: *“NSW public schools have a high proportion of out-of-field teachers which impacts on student outcomes. Out-of-field teachers account for 15% of total teachers and: 14% of secondary school teachers, 18% of maths teachers, 12% of science teachers and 35% of special education teachers.”*⁴⁸

That report also stated: *“On average, HSC scores (all courses) are increased when all teachers who taught subjects were accredited in a competency in that KLA.”*⁴⁹ Figures from another internal report, dated March 2020, (reproduced below) show significantly higher rates of out-of-area teaching in regional and rural areas.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Answer to Question on Notice No 7947, 8 October 2021, <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=88657>>

⁴⁸ Department of Education, Exec priority boost supply of high quality teachers, June 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/exec_priority_boost_supply_of_high_quality_teachers.pdf>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ NSW Department of Education, Workforce Supply & Demand and Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy, March 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/workforce_supply_and_demand_and_rapid_teacher_supply_strategy.pdf>

Out-of-area teaching – percentage of subject hours taught out of field

| | Maths 7-10 | Science | English 7-10 | History 7-10 | Geography |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| Metropolitan north | 17 | 10 | 15 | 10 | 44 |
| Metropolitan south | 16 | 13 | 15 | 15 | 61 |
| Regional north | 24 | 19 | 18 | 19 | 42 |
| Regional south | 19 | 16 | 16 | 21 | 50 |
| Rural north | 27 | 19 | 17 | 25 | 46 |
| Rural south and west | 29 | 20 | 20 | 25 | 51 |
| TOTAL | 22 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 50 |

After the release of those internal documents to the Legislative Council, Ms Mitchell admitted 21 per cent of year 7-10 teachers were working out of area. A total of 22 per cent of year 7-10 maths teachers were out of area and 32 per cent of those teaching special education were out of area.⁵¹ Documents released by the DoE to Federation earlier this year show high rates of out-of-area teaching (below) across a wide range of subject areas.⁵²

Out-of-area teaching – NSW public schools 2021

| | Out-of-area percentage |
|--|------------------------|
| Maths 7-10 | 22.6 |
| Maths 11-12 | 6 |
| Science 7-10 | 13.8 |
| Science 11-12 | 9.2 |
| History | 22.7 |
| English | 12 |
| Special Education | 32 |
| Technological and Applied Studies | 37.4 |

Teachers and principals have reported record rates of out-of-area teaching this year, increasing workloads and stress levels. Work health and safety issues have also been raised over the requirements for teachers to conduct classes in subject areas such as woodwork unsupervised and with minimal training in the use of machinery.

In the Federation's March/April 2022 member poll, 27 per cent of teachers and principals in secondary and combined schools said they were currently teaching outside their area of subject expertise. A further 56 per cent said they had taught out of area in the past.⁵³

The polling shows the less experienced a teacher is, the more likely they are teaching out of area. Among those who have been teaching for three years or less, 39 per cent said they were currently

⁵¹ Mitchell, S. Response to Supplementary Questions, Budget Estimates 2021-22, Portfolio Committee No. 3 Education, November 2021, p13

<<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/16415/Answers%20to%20supp%20questions%20-%20Hon.%20Sarah%20Mitchell%20MP,%20Education%20-%20Received%2030%20Nov%202021.pdf>>

⁵² NSW Department of Education, Briefing for the Secretary, Tab A – Key findings from ATWD NSW report and implications for DoE, March 2022. Released in GIPA 22-0318.

⁵³ NSW Teachers Federation, Member poll, Op. Cit.

teaching out of area, compared with 21 per cent of teachers with 20 years or more experience. Out-of-area teaching rates were also higher in country NSW (30 per cent) than Sydney (23 per cent).

Early career teachers report struggling to teach multiple subjects. A teacher in a Far West school with a high number of vacant positions, said: *“I have taught English, I have taught Art, I have taught Maths and Science, content areas that I am not familiar with, whatsoever.”*⁵⁴

Out-of-area teaching has been a consistent response to teacher shortages in public and private schools for many years. An Australian Council for Educational Research report found 21 per cent of year 7-10 teachers in NSW were teaching out of area in 2013.⁵⁵

The first NSW report derived from the Australian Teacher Workforce Data revealed high levels of out-of-area teaching across the sectors in 2018, when the data was collected. The report stated, *“more than one-fifth of teachers in each subject area had undertaken no tertiary study in the subject they were teaching.”*⁵⁶ In NSW secondary schools, English (23 per cent with no tertiary study) and Science teachers (22 per cent with no tertiary study) were more likely to be teaching out of area than those in the other surveyed jurisdictions.

Future supply and demand for teachers

NSW is now facing a dangerous combination of factors over the next decade: rising student enrolments, an ageing workforce and increasing attrition rates – all at the same time as graduate numbers have plummeted and teaching is viewed by the community as a far less attractive career than it was a decade ago.

Additional teachers required to meet rising enrolments

In the past 50 years, NSW public school enrolments increased by 5.4 per cent.⁵⁷ In the next 20 years, they are projected to increase by 25 per cent.⁵⁸

Using DoE enrolment projections, education economist Adam Rorris calculated that, at a minimum, an additional 11,000 teachers would be required over the next decade to meet enrolment growth. Reducing student-to-teacher ratios from the highest in the nation to the national average would lift the required number to 13,724 – a 25 per cent increase.⁵⁹ (These calculations do not include the teachers required to stop the current teacher shortages).

⁵⁴ NSW Teachers Federation, Young teachers talk, video, Facebook, May 2, 2022

<<https://www.facebook.com/NSWTeachersFederation/videos/1609047279467881>>

⁵⁵ Weldon, P, Out-of-Field Teaching in Australian Secondary Schools, Australian Council for Educational Research, June 2016, Figure 8

<<https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=policyinsights>>

⁵⁶ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Australian Teacher Workforce Data: National Teacher Workforce Characteristics Report – NSW, December 2021, p45

<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/atwd/atwd2022/state-profile--new-south-wales.pdf?sfvrsn=e827a03c_2>

⁵⁷ Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Schools and students: 2021 statistical bulletin, Department of Education, May 2022, p13 <<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/cese/publications/statistics/annual-statistical-bulletin/schools-and-students-2021-statistical-bulletin>>

⁵⁸ Infrastructure NSW, State Infrastructure Strategy 2018, p190 <https://insw-sis.visualise.today/documents/INSW_2018SIS_BuildingMomentum.pdf>

⁵⁹ Rorris, A, Impact of Enrolment Growth on Demand for Teachers, April 2021, NSW Teachers Federation, <<https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/rorris-report.pdf>>

Falling enrolments in Initial Teacher Education

A 30 per cent decline in enrolments in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses is contributing to teacher shortages. Government projections show this decline is expected to continue to add to doubts over the capacity of NSW school authorities to recruit the additional teachers required. In July last year, an internal briefing for DoE Secretary Georgina Harrison warned: *“Declining ITE enrolments is a factor contributing to teacher shortages. In 2019, only 6,780 students began a qualification, compared to 9,620 in 2014. Failing to respond to projected reductions in ITE enrolments in NSW is likely to mean a loss of over 3,000 potential teachers by 2030.”*⁶⁰

The decline in numbers is not the only concern, with evidence that increasingly young people with high ATAR scores are not choosing to become teachers.

Nationally, the proportion of young high-achievers (students aged 20 or under with an ATAR of 80 or more) choosing to study teaching declined by nearly one third between 2006 and 2019, with only 4 per cent of these students studying education in 2019.⁶¹ Completion rates among ITE bachelor students also fell by 12 percentage points between 2005 to 2014 to only 52 per cent.⁶²

Ageing workforce and predicted shortfalls

The declining supply comes at the same time as the teacher workforce is rapidly ageing with the DoE warning in 2020 that 42 per cent of teachers were aged between 45 and 64 and likely to retire within a decade.⁶³ An internal report stated: *“The supply-demand gap is likely to increase due to an ageing population of teachers. The number of potential retirees are expected to be over 4,000 in secondary schools and over 2,000 in primary schools in the next two years. The greatest proportion of these retirements will be in rural areas and the greatest number will be ‘other’, special education and technology.”*⁶⁴

Another internal report stated: *“Over forward years we would need to secure 100% of NSW ITE graduates to meet growing demand. Latest scenario modelling shows even at aggregate level, tightening availability to 2024, with insufficient aggregate supply beyond 2026. The aggregate picture hides significant geographic and KLA Issues.”*⁶⁵

As mentioned earlier, the DoE warned in 2020 that NSW public schools could run out of teachers in five years with a projected gap of 748 teachers in 2024 and 2425 in 2025.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Department of Education, Briefing for the Secretary, July 2021, Released in GIPA-21-886, <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/r_gipa-21-886_-_released_records.pdf>

⁶¹ Quality Initial Teacher Education Review 2021 Discussion Paper, Department of Education, Skills and Employment June 2021, p5 <<https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/quality-initial-teacher-education-review-2021-discussion-paper>>

⁶² Ibid. p5

⁶³ Department of Education, Teacher supply strategy briefing a/COO, August 20, 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/teacher_supply_strategy_briefing_acoo_20_august_2020.pdf>

⁶⁴ NSW Department of Education, Rapid teacher supply strategy, January 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/rapid_teacher_strategy.pdf>

⁶⁵ NSW Department of Education, Workforce Supply and Demand and Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy, March 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/workforce_supply_and_demand_and_rapid_teacher_supply_strategy.pdf>

⁶⁶ NSW Department of Education, Exec Priority Boost Supply of High Quality Teachers, June 2020 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/exec_priority_boost_supply_of_high_quality_teachers.pdf>

Without any apparent policy change, a November 2020 DoE report revised the forecasts, saying a minimum supply of teachers would be available to 2025. But it warned this masked “*significant supply gaps*”, which would impact on the quality of education in public schools in ways such as:

- *“Location-specific gaps in primary and secondary positions*
- *Lack of access to additional staff to meet school/student needs*
- *Lack of access to casual staff resulting in collapsed classes, staffing wellbeing issues and associated impact on student outcomes*
- *Lack of access to PL (professional development)*
- *Time spent by principals/middle leaders on recruitment (running multiple recruitment rounds etc), opportunity cost for focus on instructional leadership*
- *Have to accept lower quality staff to fill positions (especially, but not exclusively casual teachers)*
- *Narrowing of the curriculum offering*
- *Out-of-field teaching, resulting in impacts on student outcomes, especially in years 7-10”.*⁶⁷

Modelling completed by the federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment indicated that the demand for secondary teachers across Australia between 2021 and 2025 will exceed the number of graduates who enter the profession by 4100 teachers.⁶⁸ A confidential summary of the federal modelling shows the biggest shortage will be in NSW. The modelling shows 10,747 additional secondary teachers will be needed but estimates only 8956 will be available, leaving a shortfall of 1791.⁶⁹

Catholic Schools NSW said in a submission in August 2021 that the Catholic sector in the state will have a “*workforce shortfall of approximately 15 per cent by 2030*”.⁷⁰ The submission also stated: “*Regional and rural schools will face slightly higher shortfalls compared to metropolitan schools. The shortage is largely driven by insufficient supply of teacher graduates and the retirement of baby-boomer teachers. The gaps are largely proportionate to those predicted for government schools in NSW.*”

The recruitment and retention of teachers

The steep drop in graduate numbers reflects a decline in the attractiveness of teaching. In a public poll of 1467 adults in NSW conducted for Federation in April this year, 61 per cent of people said they believed teaching was a less attractive career option for young people than it was a decade ago. Only 11 per cent thought it was a more attractive career option.⁷¹

When asked in the poll whether they had considered a career as a teacher, one quarter of those aged 18-34 said they had. But only 3 per cent of those people had actually joined the profession. Of those who chose another career, 72 per cent said teachers’ workloads was a factor in their decision and 63 per cent said the pay compared with other professions was a factor.

⁶⁷ NSW Department of Education, Teacher Supply Update, November 2020

⁶⁸ Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Answer to Senate Question on Notice SQ22-000078, Additional Estimates 2021-22.

⁶⁹ Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Teacher projections, <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/shortages_doc.pdf>

⁷⁰ Catholic Schools NSW, Submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, August 2021, p3 <<https://www.dese.gov.au/system/files/documents/submission-file/2021-11/Catholic%20Schools%20NSW.pdf>>

⁷¹ Factuality Research, Quantitative Survey of the NSW Public, April 2022, unpublished.

Uncompetitive salaries

Teachers need a salary that reflects their skills and expertise and the volume and intensity of the work that they do. But the DoE's own research is clear that salaries are uncompetitive and reducing the attractiveness of the profession. A supply strategy briefing in 2020 was blunt: *"There are barriers to recruiting high achieving students and career changers in NSW: On average, teacher pay has been falling relative to pay in other professions since the late 1980s and this makes it a less attractive profession for high achieving students."*⁷² Warning of the disconnect between what was expected of teachers and what they were paid, it stated: *"The demands and expectations on teachers are increasing, while the current rewards, pathways, and learning opportunities are not providing enough incentive."*

On the falling ITE enrolments the same report said: *"Other career options are more attractive and salaries more competitive, particularly for high achievers."*⁷³

The DoE's 2021 research on the attractiveness of the profession also pointed to salaries and workloads as barriers for potential recruits: *"We need to acknowledge that the current experience on some dimensions is not always compelling. These include the rate of salary progression (albeit with competitive starting salary and benefits), the complex views of the possible work-life balance and limited in-classroom career progression. Many are attracted to the WLB/flexibility of teaching but lived experience does not always match that."*⁷⁴

The Commonwealth's Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (QITE) said concerns with teacher salaries and workloads were held by a majority of stakeholders and *"the potential effect of these broader issues on attracting high quality entrants to the profession should not be ignored"*.⁷⁵

"Despite teachers themselves being highly valued by the community, a number of factors devalue the status of the teaching profession, including perceptions of pay, workload and career progression," the review concluded.⁷⁶

Research conducted for the review found the most attractive incentives for young high achievers and mid-career professionals to become teachers were significantly higher starting salaries (\$90,000) and top of the scale classroom salaries (\$130,000). Higher salaries were more attractive than any study or work incentives, including scholarships, a condensed one-year qualification, or being provided with paid work throughout their study.

Along with limiting the attractiveness of the profession, salary levels are an impediment to the retention of teachers, forming a toxic combination with unsustainable workloads.

Government research shows 38 per cent of teachers believe they are fairly paid for the work they do - 21 per cent below the public sector average.⁷⁷ In the Federation's March/April member poll, 89 per

⁷² NSW Department of Education, Teacher Supply Strategy briefing, a/COO, August 20, 2020 p14 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/teacher_supply_strategy_briefing_acoo_20_august_2020.pdf>

⁷³ Ibid p7

⁷⁴ NSW Department of Education, Attraction to Teaching, August 2021, Released via GIPA-21-886 p2

⁷⁵ Paul, L, Loudon, B, Elliott, M, Scott, D, Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, Australian Government February 2022, p4

⁷⁶ Ibid p9

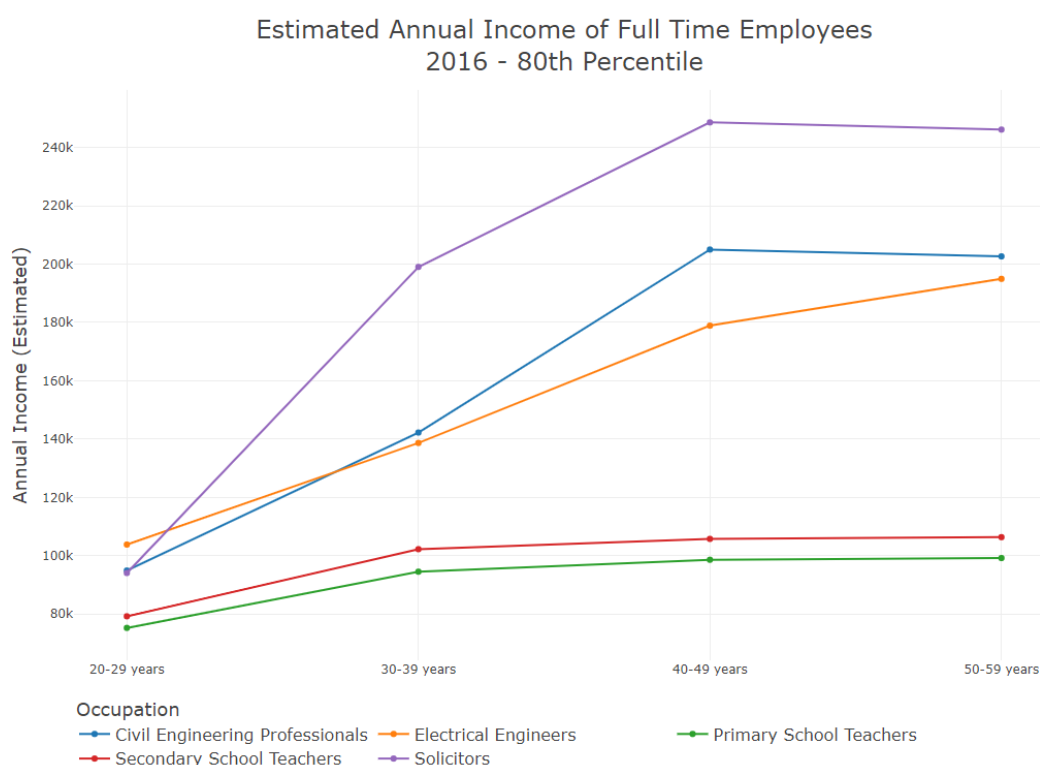
⁷⁷ Public Service Commission, People Matter Employee Survey 2021, public school teachers, p26 <<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-data/people-matter-employee-survey/pmes-2021>>

cent agreed that teaching was a more complex and challenging profession than in the past and salaries should better reflect that than they do now.⁷⁸

Research shows that overall salaries and relative salaries have an impact not only on the attractiveness of the profession but also on the retention of teachers. As the OECD stated in 2021, *“in general, the higher teachers’ salaries, the fewer people choose to leave the profession.”*⁷⁹

In a labour market where unemployment is at a 50-year low, teachers’ salaries are uncompetitive, and, as identified in DoE and University of Sydney Business School research, have been on a three-decade slide compared with the average of all professions.⁸⁰

Ms Mitchell recently said lawyers, engineers and IT professionals should be recruitment targets. Research shows people in those professions were earning as much as double what teachers did, on average, in 2016.⁸¹



Salaries in NSW have been constrained for a decade by a one-size-fits-all public sector salary cap and are now increasing at a rate far below inflation.

A 3 per cent annual pay increase at a time when inflation is 5.1 per cent and expected to rise to 7 per cent, is a significant real wage cut and will only make it more difficult to retain teachers in classrooms.

⁷⁸ NSWTF, Op. cit.

⁷⁹ OECD, Education at a Glance 2021, p358 <<https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>>

⁸⁰ Buchanan, J, Curtis, H, Tierney, S, Callus, R, NSW Teachers’ Pay: How it has changed and how it compares, University of Sydney Business School, August 2020

⁸¹ Ibid.

Premier Dominic Perrottet says NSW teachers should be “*paid the best*” and he wants the state to lead the way in providing pay increases.⁸² But the reality is teachers at the top of the classroom scale in NSW earn less than those in every other state and territory except South Australia and Tasmania.

In Queensland, teachers have recently been offered pay increases of 11 per cent over three years as well as a non-recurrent cost of living adjustment at the end of each year of the agreement, taking the potential salary increase to 20 per cent subject to the rate of inflation each year of the agreement.

Unsustainable workloads

Unsustainable workloads are not only reducing the attractiveness of the profession but also making it harder to retain teachers in the classroom. Workloads have reached this point due to a combination of factors: higher and more complex student needs coupled with frequent changes in government policy, curriculum, technology, and teaching practices. The administration, compliance and reporting obligations of teachers have increased exponentially, leaving many feeling they have two jobs -- one they want, teaching, and one they don't, administration.

The proportion of students with higher needs in NSW public schools has grown significantly in the past 20 years. The number of students from a language background other than English has grown by 58 per cent since 2002 and the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has more than doubled over the same period.⁸³ More than half of all public school students are now from low SES backgrounds.⁸⁴ In 2002, one in 25 students had a disability.⁸⁵ The proportion receiving an adjustment to their support due to disability is now one in five in metropolitan schools, rising to more than one in three in remote schools.⁸⁶

Greater student needs and school complexity have led to a far greater emphasis on personalised learning strategies and more intensive collaboration between teachers about how best to meet students' needs. Teachers have become more skilled in identifying the individual needs of students, modifying lesson plans and the curriculum as well as implementing and evaluating the strategies they have in place, and providing evidence of what they have done.

The application of new technologies has also fuelled the rapid growth in the collection of class, school and system-level data. The expectation is that teachers will use data as part of an intervention cycle; assess where students are in their learning, develop teaching and learning strategies that help them advance and then measure their progress. But there has been no additional allocation of time outside of the classroom for any of this complex and challenging work.

⁸² Nine news, 'Dozens of teachers walk out of school ahead of NSW Premier visit', April 2022
<<https://www.9news.com.au/national/nsw-teachers-walk-out-of-school-ahead-of-dominic-perrottet-visit/317f65a0-23f7-4d71-8bc6-209e330fd743>>

⁸³ Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Schools and students: 2021 and 2002 statistical bulletins
<<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/cese/publications/statistics/annual-statistical-bulletin>>

⁸⁴ NSW Department of Education, Excellence for students from low socio-economic backgrounds
<<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability/school-excellence-in-action/effective-improvement-measures-and-strategies/excellent-for-students-from-low-socio-economic-backgrounds>>

⁸⁵ Crown Employees (Teachers in Schools and TAFE and Related Employees) Salaries and Conditions Award [2004] NSW Industrial Relations Commission, p102

⁸⁶ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Answer to Question on Notice No. 8673, May 3, 2022,
<<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=91474>>

The Gallop inquiry found the hours of face-to-face teaching have not changed since the 1950s for secondary teachers and the 1980s for primary teachers, when a two-hours-a-week release entitlement was introduced.⁸⁷ That allocation does not reflect the exponential change in curriculum, technology, teaching practices, student needs and complexity and parental expectations that have occurred since the start of the century – let alone the middle of last century.

On top of this, the 2022 NSWTF member survey found principals and teachers were spending an average of 15 hours a week on administration and compliance work.⁸⁸ The Minister has admitted that teachers are “drowning” in paperwork.⁸⁹

While secretary of the DoE Georgina Harrisson admits the Department has no idea how many hours teachers work,⁹⁰ the first NSW report of the Australian Teacher Workforce Study found teachers, on average, were working more than 60 hours a week in 2018.⁹¹

In the face of this crippling workload, the DoE’s goal of reducing the administration and compliance workload of teachers by an hour a week is woefully inadequate. Even achieving that has proven to be a monumental challenge, with just 10 hours a year saved for teachers in the first three years of the initiative. Nothing was saved in 2021, according to a DoE November 2021 update.⁹²

The NSW Government has been repeatedly warned about the impact of unsustainable workloads. In the Government’s 2021 People Matter Employee Survey only 35 per cent of public school teachers said they had time to do their job well – 21 per cent lower than the public sector average. Less than half said they could keep their work stress at an acceptable level -- 15 per cent below the public sector average.⁹³

Underlining the potential for unsustainable workloads to cause an exodus from the profession, seven out of 10 members said they were reconsidering their future in the profession due to the workload in the Federation’s March/April 2022 survey.⁹⁴

Among the recommendations the QITE review said were designed to address teacher shortages, was cutting administrative workloads. *“The profession will be more attractive to new candidates if the*

⁸⁷ Gallop, G, Kavanagh, T, Lee, P, Valuing the Teaching Profession, an independent inquiry, February 2021, p86 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/inquiry>

⁸⁸ NSW Teachers Federation, Member poll, March/April 2022.

⁸⁹ Mitchell, S, Interview, Today Show, March 2022 <<https://9now.nine.com.au/today/videos/latest/nsw-teachers-at-risk-of-burnout-as-students-struggle-adjusting-to-class-life-post-pandemic/cl0Zr6sxj003h0jqr642adh23>>

⁹⁰ Harrisson, G, Evidence to Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education, NSW Legislative Council, August 2021, p34 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/2695/Transcript%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%202021-2022%20-%20PC3%20-%2027%20August%202021%20-%20CORRECTED.pdf>>

⁹¹ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Australian Teacher Workforce Data: National Teacher Workforce Characteristics Report – NSW, December 2021, p24 https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/atwd/atwd2022/state-profile--new-south-wales.pdf?sfvrsn=e827a03c_2>

⁹² NSW Department of Education, Quality Time Progress Update, November 2021. Released in GIPA-21-1018. See p31 of the pdf. <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/quality_time_progress_update.pdf>

⁹³ Public Service Commission, People Matter Employee Survey, 2021 public school teachers, p12 and p14 <<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-data/people-matter-employee-survey/pmes-2021>>

⁹⁴ NSWTF, Member Poll, Op. cit.

*burden of red tape is removed from teachers' workloads and the Expert Panel recommends an audit.*⁹⁵

Insecure work

The growth in insecure work is also a factor impacting on the decisions of teachers as to whether to stay in the profession.

The NSW Coalition has dramatically increased the level of insecure work in the teaching profession in the decade since it was elected. The number of full-time equivalent temporary teachers increased by 70 per cent between 2012 and 2021 and they now make up 30 per cent of the workforce.⁹⁶ This is impacting on the retention of teachers, contributing to high churn rates, and reducing the continuity of teaching and learning in schools. Ms Mitchell has claimed that permanent staffing positions are available and teachers *"for whatever reason, may want to remain in temporary or casual roles by choice"*.⁹⁷ The reality is, insecure work is causing widespread frustration and disenchantment particularly among newer entrants to the profession. Teachers report being stuck in temporary jobs for a decade or more with no prospect of gaining permanent employment.

The DoE's own research has warned that the high proportion of early career teachers who are temporary or casual is contributing to higher attrition rates. A 2020 report said only 22 per cent of pre-service teachers entered the workforce in permanent roles⁹⁸. Another report stated: *"67% of early career teachers are in temporary or casual roles. This contributes to early career teachers leaving the public system or leaving teaching."*⁹⁹

Teachers leaving the profession and churn

The data on how long teachers stay in the profession is incomplete and the DoE claims it has no figures on the attrition rate of the 30 per cent of teachers who are in temporary roles.

Research by the NSW Education Standards Authority found the rate of graduate teachers leaving the profession has accelerated in recent years. Of the public and private school teachers who were granted initial teacher accreditation in 2013, 13 per cent had been removed from the accreditation list within six years.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Paul, L, Loudon, B, Elliott, M, Scott, D, Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, Australian Government February 2022, piv

⁹⁶ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council Answer to Question on Notice No. 8523, 12 April, 2022, <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=91070>>

⁹⁷ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Response to Question without Notice, 19 November 2021 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1820781676-87505/link/93>>

⁹⁸ NSW Department of Education, Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy, January 2020, pdf p18 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/rapid_teacher_strategy.pdf>

⁹⁹ NSW Department of Education, Meeting with the secretary, November 3, 2020

¹⁰⁰ NSW Education Standards Authority, Attrition of NSW Graduate Teachers Report, March 2020, p3, <<https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/52c01926-cda4-4ab2-ac70-9365378c9d37/Attrition+of+NSW+Graduate+Teachers+report.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=>>>

DoE 2020 figures show among permanent teachers, 8.8 per cent leave in the first five years, compared with 4.9 per cent of all permanent teachers.¹⁰¹ Government data also shows the median tenure of public school teachers has decreased by 15 per cent since 2017 and is now 11.4 years.¹⁰²

Ms Mitchell said last year that “*after a challenging few years with severe drought, bushfires and the global COVID-19 pandemic, the rate in which teachers are retiring has picked up*”.¹⁰³ Current reported yearly retirement rates are 2.2 per cent for secondary schools and 2.1 per cent for primary schools.¹⁰⁴

Data on the time teachers stay in a school is not published. However, internal DoE figures show the annual churn rate for teachers between 2017 and 2019 was high at around 12 per cent in metropolitan schools, rising to more than 15 per cent in the rural north region.¹⁰⁵ Predictably, the rate was far lower for permanent teachers than all teachers.

Workforce planning

The teacher shortages have been exacerbated by an abject lack of workforce planning at a state and national level. Despite universal agreement on the critical importance of teachers, there is still no national model of supply and demand, as the QITE Review made clear.¹⁰⁶

There has been a consistent mis-match between supply and demand, particularly in areas of intractable shortages.

In NSW, the Auditor-General warned in 2019 the DoE’s capacity to track and forecast the supply and demand for teachers was hampered by the fact it had no idea what secondary teachers were teaching. “*The Department does not collect sufficient information to monitor what disciplines teachers actually teach, nor does it predict supply and demand for teachers by discipline and location.*”¹⁰⁷

In response to the Public Accounts Committee’s questions about the report, the then-DoE secretary Mark Scott said in July 2020 the Department had improved its workforce planning model and had forecasts for the supply and demand of teachers out to 2030.¹⁰⁸ But a subsequent freedom of information request for that information, lodged by the Federation, was rejected on the basis that the information did not exist and would take too much time to compile. In April last year, the DoE

¹⁰¹ NSW Department of Education, Workforce Supply and Demand and Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy, March 2020, pdf p7

<https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/workforce_supply_and_demand_and_rapid_teacher_supply_strategy.pdf>

¹⁰² Public Service Commission, Workforce Profile Reports, 2017 and 2021

<<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-data/workforce-profile/workforce-profile-reports>>

¹⁰³ NSW Department of Education, Teacher Supply Strategy, October 2021, p2.

<<https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/about-us/strategies-and-reports/media/documents/NSW-teacher-supply-strategy.pdf>>

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p7

¹⁰⁵ NSW Department of Education, Meeting with the Secretary, November 2020.

¹⁰⁶ Quality Initial Teacher Education Review 2021 Discussion Paper, Department of Education, Skills and Employment June 2021, p13 <<https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/quality-initial-teacher-education-review-2021-discussion-paper>>

¹⁰⁷ Audit Office of NSW, Supply of secondary teachers in STEM-related disciplines, January 2019, Overview, <<https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/supply-of-secondary-teachers-in-stem-related-disciplines>>

¹⁰⁸ Scott, M, Letter to Piper, G, Chair, Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee, July 2020

claimed it was not possible to accurately predict the needs of the NSW workforce past 2025.¹⁰⁹ In October, Ms Mitchell refused to supply teacher projections to 2031, saying only “*the Department requires about 750 additional teaching FTE per year through to 2025*”.¹¹⁰

NSW Teacher Supply Strategy

After a decade without a comprehensive workforce strategy, the NSW Government released its long-awaited \$125 million Teacher Supply Strategy in October 2021. Compiled without consultation with the profession, the public version of the strategy is a 13-page brochure.¹¹¹

This brochure contains no supply and demand forecasts by subject or area and no year-by-year recruitment targets. There are no targets for the reduction of out-of-area teaching, despite the documented impact of that on what students achieve.

Ignoring the conclusions of its own research, the Government’s strategy ignores the primary reasons for the decline in the attractiveness of the profession – unsustainable workloads and uncompetitive salaries.

Instead, it relies on recycled initiatives and untested, expensive long-shots that will produce only tiny numbers of teachers and rely on watering down the qualifications required to teach.

Instead of making teaching more attractive, it will be made **to look** more attractive via a “*targeted-awareness raising and marketing campaign*”.

The Government’s strategy aims to deliver 1600 in five years and 3700 in a decade above normal recruitment, whatever that means. These are tiny numbers in a system the DoE claims has more than 91,000 teachers on the payroll and has appointed 25,000 permanent teachers in the past five years.¹¹²

Shortly after its release, the Minister couldn’t explain how the Government will spend the majority of the \$125 million it has allocated to the strategy. The breakdown provided showed:

- a) \$5 million marketing and TV advertising to 2024/25
- b) \$17.88 million mid-career entry program to 2024/25
- c) \$15 million for recruitment outside of NSW to 2024/25
- d) \$29 million scholarships
- e) \$63 million for other initiatives (not b, c or d).¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Baker, J, ‘NSW public schools need 20 per cent more teachers by 2031: report’, Sydney Morning Herald, April 2021, <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/nsw-public-schools-need-20-per-cent-more-teachers-by-2031-report-20210419-p57kaz.html>>

¹¹⁰ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council, Response to Question on Notice No. 7496, October, 8, 2021 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=88656>>

¹¹¹ NSW Department of Education, Teacher Supply Strategy, October 2021. <<https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/about-us/strategies-and-reports/media/documents/NSW-teacher-supply-strategy.pdf>>

¹¹² NSW Department of Education, Teacher Supply Strategy, October 2021.

<<https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/about-us/strategies-and-reports/media/documents/NSW-teacher-supply-strategy.pdf>>

¹¹³ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 3 -Education, Responses to Supplementary Questions, November 2021, p15.

<<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/16415/Answers%20to%20supp%20questions%20-%20Hon.%20Sarah%20Mitchell%20MP,%20Education%20-%20Received%2030%20Nov%202021.pdf>>

Recruitment Beyond NSW

The only short-term recruitment initiative in the strategy is the Recruitment Beyond NSW (RBNSW) plan to recruit 560 STEM teachers from outside of NSW by 2024 (460 in 2022-23 and 100 in 2023-24).¹¹⁴ This is at a time when DoE figures show an existing shortage of 800 STEM teachers.¹¹⁵

The Government conducted no market research to determine whether, at a time of a worldwide shortage of STEM teachers, its signature initiative would succeed.¹¹⁶ That decision was made despite an earlier DoE warning: *“The extent to which international teachers would be convinced to migrate by the opportunity to get a sponsorship visa would need to be tested via international research.”*¹¹⁷

The \$15 million program is yet to deliver a single teacher¹¹⁸, despite the program management plan saying they would start arriving at the beginning of the 2022 school year¹¹⁹ and the Government claiming in March they were flocking to NSW.¹²⁰ Underlining the absence of research undertaken before the announcement of the initiative, the Premier Dominic Perrottet recently complained that it will take 18 months to process the visas of teachers based overseas.¹²¹

While claiming to be recruiting *“the best teachers from around the world”*, DoE documents show teachers do not even need to be university qualified in the subject area. Recruitment guidelines state participants only need two years teaching experience and *“you must be qualified to teach or have experience in one of the specified teaching areas for the program within the last five years”*.¹²²

Other initiatives

Another one of the initiatives in the strategy, getting School Learning Support Officers to become teachers is also untested despite the DoE’s 2020 warning: *“It is not clear whether there is demand from teaching assistants or School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs) to up-skill and become fully qualified teachers.”*¹²³

The evidence also shows there has been a low take up of sponsorship and scholarship programs the DoE is now relying on. The teach.MathsNOW initiative, which had a target of 320 scholarships over

¹¹⁴ NSW Department of Education, ‘Teach NSW’ calling for the world’s best teachers’, September 2021 <https://education.nsw.gov.au/news/latest-news/teach-nsw-calling-for-the-world-s-best-teachers>

¹¹⁵ NSW Department of Education, 2022 School Staffing, Released to the NSWTF in GIPA-21-886, pdf p4 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/r_gipa-21-886_-_released_records_staffing.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 3 -Education, Responses to Supplementary Questions, November 2021, p16.

¹¹⁷ Department of Education, Teacher Supply Strategy Briefing, a/COO, August 2020, pdf p14. <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/teacher_supply_strategy_briefing_acoo_20_august_2020.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council Response to Question on Notice No. 8917, Recruitment Beyond NSW, June 2022 <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=92059>>

¹¹⁹ NSW Department of Education, Program Management Plan, Recruitment Beyond NSW, October 2021, p4. <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/supplementary_docs_march_2022.pdf>

¹²⁰ NSW Department of Education, ‘Interstate and overseas teachers flock to teach in NSW’, March 2022 <<https://education.nsw.gov.au/news/latest-news/interstate-and-overseas-teachers-flock-to-teach-in-nsw>>

¹²¹ Cormack, L and Carroll, L, ‘We can’t wait: NSW, Victoria demand urgent action on worker shortages’, Brisbane Times, May 2022 <<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/nsw/we-can-t-wait-nsw-victoria-demand-urgent-action-on-worker-shortages-20220526-p5aou6.html>>

¹²² NSW Department of Education, Recruitment Beyond NSW Program, Terms and Conditions, p2

¹²³ Department of Education, Teacher Supply Strategy Briefing, a/COO, August 2020, pdf p14 <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/teacher_supply_strategy_briefing_acoo_20_august_2020.pdf>

four years, has only delivered five career changers as Maths teachers in public schools.¹²⁴ Internal documents show the update of sponsorship programs designed to get teachers to retrain had been falling since 2017 “with fewer than 10 places filled across STEM, ESL, careers and librarian programs”.¹²⁵

In another indication of how desperate the situation is, Ms Mitchell said a fly in, fly out plan to put casual teachers into rural communities was under consideration.¹²⁶

Mid-career entry

The \$18 million mid-career entry program had 30 of the 50 people who were offered places take part in the first round.¹²⁷ Of those, 28 have just started in schools as para-professionals. In the second round of the program the aim was to get in 25 career changers¹²⁸ but Ms Mitchell recently predicted only 17 will start in schools in coming months.¹²⁹

A secondary principal in the Far West, said he was offered one of the mid-career entrants but the school was required to provide a supervisor and a mentor with the only compensation being two casual relief days at a time when casual teachers cannot be found. The principal declined the offer saying there was no guarantee the person would be placed in the school once they had completed their post-graduate qualification and “it was too big an ask” considering the school is already five teachers short.¹³⁰

Significant financial incentives are involved including a \$30,000 training allowance, paid employment during the study period, a guaranteed permanent teaching position and \$30,000 study completion bonus. A DoE internal report raised a valid point about additional incentive/sign-up payments saying they were “likely to raise questions over why we don’t pay all teachers more so that we can guarantee supply”.¹³¹

Even controversial plans to use Teach for Australia (TFA), a program with high costs and low retention rates, for the development of a mid-career model have produced nothing in more than 18 months since a \$400,000 commitment was made.¹³²

An internal DoE report warned models such as TFA “are not necessarily sustainable on a large scale due to the large cost per student”. “The average cost to train each Teach for Australia associate in

¹²⁴ Mitchell, S, NSW Legislative Council Response to Question on Notice No. 8528, April 2022
<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=91075>

¹²⁵ NSW Department of Education, Rapid Teacher Supply Strategy, executive summary, January 2020

¹²⁶ Burley, E, ‘NSW considers fly-in fly-out teachers to plug regional shortage’, The Saturday Telegraph, June 4, 2022 <<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/education-new-south-wales/nsw-considers-flyin-flyout-teachers-to-plug-regional-shortage/news-story/470b5297147194b729ba559f6116bd03>>

¹²⁷ Cachia, Y, Evidence to Portfolio Committee No.3 – Education, NSW Legislative Council, March 2, 2022.

¹²⁸ NSW Nationals, ‘Boosting teacher numbers in the bush’, March 2022

<<https://www.nswnationals.org.au/boosting-teacher-numbers-in-the-bush/>>

¹²⁹ NSW Department of Education, Day one for state’s first mid-career teachers’, July 2022

<<https://education.nsw.gov.au/news/latest-news/day-one-for-state-s-first-mid-career-teachers>>

¹³⁰ Grant Shepherd, Twitter, July 2022 <https://twitter.com/Grant_Shep/status/1549652836577079296>

¹³¹ NSW Department of Education, Innovative programs into secondary teachers for career changers with significant experience, May 2021.

¹³² Perrottet, D and Mitchell, S, ‘New Pathway into Teaching for Professionals’, NSW Government, Media Release, November 2020 <<https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/Dominic%20Perrottet%20Sarah%20Mitchell%20med%20rel%20-%20New%20pathway%20into%20teaching%20for%20professionals.pdf>>

*the first three streams of the program was \$179,000. Currently estimated to be \$127,000 per associate participating in stream four and five of the scheme. Retention rates are almost half.*¹³³

A national response to teacher shortages

In an effort to distract from its failures, the NSW Government now appears determined to make the supply of teachers a national problem with Ms Mitchell recently declaring: *“Teacher supply is a national issue, and it needs a national response.”*¹³⁴

Both Mr Perrottet and Ms Mitchell support alternative entry programs, that can “reduce barriers” to entry and fast-track career changers into the front of classrooms with as little as six months training.

But the Government’s position is in conflict with its narrative about the importance of teacher quality and its arguments for more content in existing ITE courses. In its submission to the QITE review, the Government warned that students needed additional training in how to differentiate for and teach students with disability, along with managing challenging behaviours.¹³⁵

International research also shows lowering standards and fast-tracking people into teaching are an expensive and counter-productive way to address teacher shortages. A US report warned:

*“Short-term solutions may temporarily curb the fear of empty classrooms, but, as we found, they can often exacerbate the problem over the long haul. For example, if teachers are hired without having been fully prepared, the much higher turnover rates that result are costly in terms of both dollars spent on the replacement process and decreases in student achievement in high-turnover schools. Long-term solutions focusing on recruitment and retention can ease the shortage, while also prioritizing student learning and a strong teacher workforce. At first, the price tag for these investments may seem substantial, but evidence suggests that these proposals would ultimately save far more in reduced costs for teacher turnover and student underachievement than they would cost.”*¹³⁶

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has also warned there is no “quick fix” for the shortages and a national focus on increasing supply *“must not compromise quality teaching, which is the biggest in-school influence driving positive outcomes for students”*.¹³⁷

While there is clearly value in the states and territories working on supply issues with the Commonwealth, they remain the employers of teachers and responsible for their salaries and workloads.

¹³³ NSW Department of Education, Innovative programs into secondary teachers for career changers with significant experience, May 2021.

¹³⁴ Mitchell, S, Twitter, July 20, 2022 <<https://twitter.com/smitchellmlc/status/1549555241418637312>>

¹³⁵ NSW Department of Education, NSW submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, August 2021 p12-13 <<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/nsw-submission-to-the-commonwealth-initial-teacher-education-rev>>

¹³⁶ Sutchter, L, Darling-Hammond, L, Carver, D, A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Learning Policy Institute, September 2016.

¹³⁷ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Media Release, July 22, 2022

Attempts by the previous federal government to intervene on the issue of teacher administrative workloads were resisted by the states and territories and produced nothing of substance.¹³⁸

Federal interventions have led to added layers of administrative burden and complexities.

The approval to teach process in NSW

The approval to teach process in the NSW public school system provides a means of upholding professional standards that underpin quality teaching and learning in every classroom. While all processes should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are effectively and efficiently fulfilling their intended purpose, Federation rejects any changes to the “approval to teach process” that compromises professional standards and/or would allow for the employment of para-professionals in lieu of fully qualified teachers.

The NSW Government’s ongoing parade of gimmicks allegedly designed to address the teacher shortages (such as fly-in-fly-out teachers and deploying first-year student teachers as para-professionals) threaten professional standards. Entry standards into the profession and related “approval to teach processes” cannot be compromised to address the current shortages.

The role of the Staffing Agreement in the context of a statewide staffing crisis

The NSW Government and the DoE have a responsibility to ensure every public school is adequately staffed with permanent, specialist, qualified and accredited teachers. This is fundamental to establishing a stable, “high-quality, high-equity” public school system that effectively meets the diverse needs of its students.

The Staffing Agreement is critical to maintaining the system’s capacity to regulate the distribution of qualified and accredited teachers to every school community across the state.

In the context of the current teacher shortages, it is important to note that:

- 1) The Staffing Agreement and its related procedures can only distribute teachers effectively via mixed modes of appointment if teachers are available to the system for engagement in the processes and subsequent deployment.
- 2) Critical features of the Staffing Agreement that successive state governments and the DoE have actively sought to undermine or have otherwise neglected (such as teacher permanency, service transfers, priority transfers and the notion of an employment list) would be of great value in helping to address and emerge from the crisis if they were fully realised in practice, and they must be enhanced in future iterations of the Staffing Agreement.

Considering this, the assumption of the term of reference (j) for this inquiry is flawed. While the principal has an important operational responsibility in staffing their school within a public school system, the overarching responsibility is that of the Government of the day and its DoE. To this end, the NSW Government and its Department have failed.

¹³⁸ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Shifting the balance: Increasing the focus on teaching and learning by reducing the burden of compliance and administration, December 2020 <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/red-tape/review-to-reduce-red-tape-for-teachers-and-school-leaders.pdf?sfvrsn=7cb3d93c_2>

The DoE's steady, and at times intentional, erosion of a range of systemic staffing provisions is the result of both industrial manoeuvring at the table (often ideologically driven by government policy with a preference for deregulation and devolution), and the institutional neglect of staffing operations and provisions once agreement has been reached (in the form of understaffing its own operations and favouring some modes of filling vacancies).

The net result is that executive and classroom teachers have increasingly lost confidence in the system to support their career mobility as an open market at the individual school level has been elevated in culture and practice as a primary means of filling vacancies. The underlying dynamic of such arrangements is that teachers are in competition for jobs, and schools are in competition for teachers. Beyond the enforceable obligations of the Staffing Agreement, the DoE has effectively abandoned the field and thrown the staffing of schools to "the market" where it is shaped by the individual will and circumstances of teachers and the capacity of schools to attract and retain teaching staff.

As mentioned earlier, in historically difficult-to-staff areas (remote, rural and some low-SES school communities in regional and metropolitan settings) the experience of staff shortages pre-dates the current crisis by decades. Many of those schools have been increasingly confronted by a DoE operationally incapable of providing appointments, and processes that attract few (if any) applications. This is now a statewide phenomenon.

The significant administrative burden for principals associated with recruiting executive and classroom teachers is now matched by the frustration of investing time and resources in staffing processes that fail to fill vacancies.

While the staffing crisis can only be resolved in the long term by providing the salaries and working conditions that will attract and retain teachers, revitalising key components of the Staffing Agreement and operations that regulate and facilitate the distribution of teachers would establish the pre-conditions for more effectively staffing public schools across the system with the currently available workforce. It would also provide the foundations for guaranteeing that every classroom is staffed with qualified and accredited teachers into the future. A functional centralised service transfer system and effective "approved to teach" list are critical to this task.

The impact of incentives and the transfer point system on regional shortages

Historically, many rural schools report difficulties in attracting teachers with local job advertisements often going unanswered. In extreme cases, offers of permanent employment have been turned down by applicants and the insufficient supply of appropriately trained and qualified teachers (including school counsellors and special education teachers) has left student needs unmet and narrowed the curriculum. This is further compounded by the widespread casual teacher shortage that forces schools to collapse or combine classes, provide minimal supervision, and which results in individual teachers denying themselves their entitlement to sick leave, FACS, other forms of leave and release to attend professional learning activities.

While intersecting disadvantage manifests in a range of communities across the state, the student achievement gap in rural and remote areas will worsen if the NSW Government and DoE do not take immediate action to address chronic staff shortages in remote, rural and regional areas.

Of particular concern for rural and remote communities is the DoE's failure to implement statewide system reforms that take advantage of the growth in recurrent funding. Specifically, the DoE should:

- increase permanent teacher employment in every school to facilitate inbuilt teacher relief arrangements that address casual teacher shortages as they have committed to do in Connected Community schools
- recruit additional dual-qualified school counsellors and qualified special education teachers with meaningful retraining programs and scholarships
- ensure the filling of permanent vacancies in a timely manner to increase stability of staffing.

Federation welcomed the DoE's commitment to work closely with the union to develop, fund and implement the following additional recruitment and retention strategies:

- priority transfers for Connected Community executive principals
- flexible Incentive packages - up to \$30,000 for teachers in Connected Communities and Rural and Remote incentive transfer schools
- an Experienced Teacher Benefit - \$10,000 per annum for up to 5 years for teachers in 6 and 8 point and incentive transfer Connected Community schools
- an Experienced Teacher Benefit - \$10,000 per annum for up to 5 years for teachers in 6 and 8 point incentive transfer schools and all incentive Connected Community schools
- recruitment bonus of up to \$20,000.

Such improvements to the employment and living conditions of teachers are critical to achieving greater stability in permanent staffing and continuity of teaching and learning for students in rural and remote public school communities. It's hard to imagine how much worse the shortages might be in the remotest parts of regional and rural NSW had such incentives not been secured and delivered to teachers.

Staffing schools above the base allocation

The recurrent funding achieved through the NSW Gonski agreement should have translated to more permanent teaching positions. The DoE has the means to employ additional permanent teachers and increase the capacity of all schools to deliver learning programs that meaningfully engage all students based on their individual needs.

In lieu of increasing staffing entitlements, the DoE has only provided limited options for schools to employ temporary and casual teachers as contingent, short-term measures, and it has left the employment of "above base allocation" permanent staff as a local "decision" using an available, though limited, provision of the Staffing Agreement (that principals are discouraged from accessing). This hardly reflects a serious or sustainable commitment to high-quality/high-equity public schooling.

In the context of the current staffing shortages, principals can only employ teachers above their base allocation if, in the first instance, they can find casual and temporary teachers to permanently employ.

The impact of COVID-19 and workplace mandates on staffing

As explained in the sections above, COVID-19 has clearly exacerbated the current staffing crisis, but it is not the primary cause of the shortages.

The Government response to the pandemic (in the form of DoE advice and provisions) was often experienced at the school level as problematic and contradictory and was most effective when it was

consistent with the prevailing health advice. The impact of responses such as remote teaching and safety restrictions on staffing were mixed. Initially Federation had to fight to have the DoE maintain the employment of casual teachers when many schools determined that the shift to remote learning made casuals redundant. But as the pandemic moved through new phases of surges in case numbers, shutdowns and opening-up with new restrictions, it became apparent that not only were casual and temporary teachers essential, but they were also in short supply.

If anything, remote teaching allowed for teachers to continue working on days when they may have otherwise been on sick leave and/or were required to be in isolation. It also allowed schools to configure their programs in ways that could cover the staffing shortages, and although not consistently supported by the Government and its department, outside of periods of statewide remote learning, it remains a necessary strategy for schools to manage cohorts effectively when confronted by surges of staff absences.

In the context of the deeper structural issues with staffing and the ongoing pandemic, the COVID-19 workplace mandates had a relatively small impact on the staffing crisis. While at the school level, every available teacher is critical to daily operations, systemically, as indicated by Ms Harrisson, the mandate removal will have little impact on the current staffing situation.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ NSW Department of Education, 'NSW Education proposes change to vaccine mandate', June 2022
<<https://education.nsw.gov.au/news/latest-news/nsw-education-proposes-change-to-vaccine-mandate>