

**Submission
No 117**

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: NSW Primary Principals' Association

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New South Wales Primary Principals' Association

www.nswppa.org.au

The New South Wales Primary Principals Association welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Upper House Education Committee's Inquiry into Teacher Shortages in New South Wales.

Executive Summary and Recommendations

The New South Wales Primary Principals' Association Inc is the professional body representing principals of public schools with primary aged students in NSW Public Schools and Centres. The Association seeks to support, empower, advocate for and lead its members to enable success for all public primary school students.

This submission has been reviewed and ratified by the Executive of the Association.

The NSWPPA believes that the current challenges in staffing schools not only have consequences today but may have a compounding effect into the future. The challenges are not only due to issues related to COVID-19 restrictions, but they have exacerbated the overall problem.

Putting COVID-19 aside the challenges around staffing are particularly difficult in certain geographic areas and in specific subject areas.

A comprehensive body of evidence, research and reports exists which comprise recommendations that the Association supports as possible solutions to teacher shortages in NSW.

Action is urgently required on all aspects of:

- [The 2021 NSW Teacher Supply Strategy;](#)
- [The 2021 Gallop Inquiry;](#)
- [The 2021 Review of Rural and Remote Incentives in NSW Public Schools;](#)
- [The 2022 Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review;](#)

in partnership with the professional associations to attract and retain high quality teachers and leaders.

Research Links

NSW Teacher Supply Strategy

NSW Department of Education, 2021.

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

A Review of Rural and Remote Incentives in NSW Public Schools

NSW Department of Education, 2021

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/review-of-rural-remote-incentives-report>

Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Department of Education, Skills & Employment, 2022.

<https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review>

The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey

(IPPE Report), Riley et al., 2020.

https://www.principalhealth.org/reports/2020_AU_Final_Report.pdf

Principal Workload and Time Use Study

(Deloitte), NSW Department of Education, 2017.

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/gef/media/documents/Principal-workload-and-time-use-study-Nov-2017.pdf>

Quality Time Action Plan - to simplify administrative practices in schools

NSW Department of Education, 2021.

https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/about-us/strategies-and-reports/media/documents/Action_Plan_Quality_Time.pdf

Understanding Work In Schools

NSWTF, 2018.

<https://news.nswtf.org.au/application/files/7315/3110/0204/Understanding-Work-In-Schools.pdf>

Valuing the Teaching Profession

Gallop Inquiry Report, NSWTF, 2020.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e3758f6cdad377a5754259c/t/60597e729a6b026b0016beef/1616477832453/gallop_inquiry_report_2021.pdf

NSW Public Schools to 2031, Impact of Growth on Demand for Teachers

NSWTF, 2021.

<https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/rorris-report.pdf>

The latest Flourish Movement report will be released over coming weeks, the 2019 Report is here:

<https://www.theflourishmovement.com/driven-by-data>

Response to Terms of Reference

(a) current teacher shortages in NSW schools

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- The current staffing crisis has been exacerbated by the Covid/Influenza epidemics, but they are not the cause. Teachers are leaving the profession, retirement is but one reason, increasingly, early career teachers are seeing that their skills can get them alternative careers with less stress, shorter hours and more pay. The solution is to address workload and salary.
- Public Education teachers continue to provide daily quality education, despite staff shortages. The system has always been propped up by the good will of employees but currently it is only surviving due to the willingness of teachers to do extra duties, cover classes, work on their days off. If public school teachers worked to rule the system would fall apart.
- Day to day casual teachers are in limited supply. These teachers cover sick leave and short term leave applications.
- Temporary positions - challenging to fill as we are facing a workforce issue where teachers are not wanting full time employment due to the workflow demands and requirements. The impact of this is far reaching - not least is the impact on the ability of schools to run programs to support students and school improvement due to staff availability.
- Cancellation of teaching and learning programs due to lack of casuals and temporary staff availability impacts on teacher professional learning and teaching and learning of students.
- Part of the shortage has been created by additional resourcing. Additional Directors, counsellors, PSLs, APCIs etc. These staff come out of schools. The additional resourcing is welcomed, but supply needs to be considered in decisions.
- Factors 'unique' to NSW are impacting on teacher shortages. Higher costs of housing in particular means that lower paying jobs such as teaching are not as attractive for quality applicants.
- Issues including an inequitable Principal Classification system reduces the attractiveness and longevity of retaining staff in the profession.

Possible Solutions:

In partnership with the professional associations, action is urgently required on all aspects of:

- [The 2021 NSW Teacher Supply Strategy;](#)
- [The 2021 Gallop Inquiry;](#)
- [The 2021 Review of Rural and Remote Incentives in NSW Public Schools;](#)
- [The 2022 Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review](#)

(b) future teacher supply and demand

Impact on our members, students and schools:

Attracting and retaining high quality and highly skilled teachers to the profession for the future is dependent on several conditions including: -

- Quality Initial Teacher Education pathways in universities which connect to primary schools early in the course and provide a pathway of employment for students in their final year of the course.
- The demand for high quality and skilled teachers is increasing, but so are the demands ON teachers, making it a less appealing profession for young people who know they can experience more favourable working conditions and gain higher salaries in other industries.
- Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for teachers is a lost tradition.

- The shortage of teachers is not unique to NSW. The teacher shortage is a national issue. International colleagues report the same.
- The challenge is not only about attracting people into the profession but also needing to retain them.
- Pay and conditions are not the only disincentives. Work that takes teachers away from teaching and learning; increased compliance training / administration takes time, energy and enthusiasm out of teachers' ability to collaborate, plan and prepare quality and differentiated teaching and learning experiences for students.
- Teacher supply strategies must systematically address the supply needs over time whilst not compromising the quality of teachers through less rigorous or reduced training.

Possible Solutions:

- Creative ITE solutions including the current initiatives: final year employment in schools | SLSO roles in schools | explicit coaching and mentoring support in schools | partnerships with schools.
- Recruit teachers for Local Area Relief Scheme to create accessibility to high quality casual staff.
- Increase in primary teachers' RFF (2 hours to 4) to focus on core business including: facilitate differentiated professional learning | collaboration between staff with the APCI / Instructional Leader | mentoring and coaching | planning personalised teaching and learning and resources | curriculum development | meeting with parents, carers and interagency support for students | complete compliance training.
- Continue to work in partnership with the Professional Associations to codesign and plan for contemporary strategies to attract and retain high quality teachers and leaders. Immediate, short term and long-term strategies need to be in place. More recently a number of initiatives have been implemented including Fast Stream, mid-career transition and ITE 4th year students working in our schools.
- HECS fees for ITE courses at universities need to be minimised and increased University Scholarships offered.
- Administrative support for teachers and leaders & mentoring and coaching for early career teachers.
- Significant investment in Rural and Remote Incentives must be enhanced: ensuring teacher housing and workforce planning provisions are offered for the teacher/leader/Principals' partner/spouse /children so the attraction becomes a retained position and contributor to the community.
- Create a nationally consistent accreditation agreement to facilitate mobility of staff seamlessly.

(c) out-of-area teaching, merged classes and minimal supervision in NSW schools

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- All NSW Public Schools have remained open. Learning from home has been a strategy employed for short periods of time during high case levels of COVID. Cohorts learning from home has been the most commonly employed model.
- Empirical and anecdotal evidence from NSW schools is that out of area teaching, merged classes and minimal supervision is increasing due to casual teacher shortages. The world-wide pandemic has exacerbated this issue.
- In order to cover classes and minimise merging, often other programs within a school are collapsed. Staff who have off-class roles are often on class for the day, necessitating them to perform their regular roles

outside of hours. The impact of this is a negative one on the outcomes for students who miss out on the programs and expert support initially planned for these staff to deliver.

- These changes to planned programs and disruption to continuity of teaching and learning contribute to challenges for schools to meet system targets.
- There is a reduction in professional learning and collaboration due to lack of casual staff available to cover classes.
- There is a significant negative impact on the health and wellbeing outcomes of staff due to the increased working hours required.
- There is also a significant workload in administering the acquisition of casual teachers, including organising RFF, duty and learning program timetables to accommodate the daily variations in routine. The communication of these changes to all stakeholders is also problematic and significantly increases the workload for Principals, teachers and administrative staff.

Qualitative data case study:

Large primary school over a seven-week period:

Out of 34 school days:

- 30 classes have been split
- 45 support days have been lost (CILSP, Learning & Support, Library admin)
- Part-time teachers have worked 4 days of their days off
- 2 corporate staff have left their jobs to cover classes.
- 17 days have been lost from SASS support (SLSO, admin staff, grounds)

Possible Solutions:

- The DoE work with the NSWPPA, NSWSPC and NSWTF to continue to codesign effective solutions to address teacher supply in the short and long term.

(d) the NSW Teacher Supply Strategy

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- The NSW Teacher Supply Strategy outlines a range of initiatives; however, action needs to be taken to fully implement the initiatives and measure the impact and effectiveness of each initiative.

Research:

A Review of Rural and Remote Incentives in NSW Public Schools

NSW Department of Education, 2021

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/review-of-rural-remote-incentives-report>

Valuing the Teaching Profession

Gallop Inquiry Report, NSWTF, 2020.

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Possible Solutions:

- The Department work with the NSWPPA, NSWSPC and NSWTF to codesign effective solutions to address teacher supply in the short and long term.
- Short term emergency action is required to address teacher shortages.
- Long term action is required to ensure a consistent pipeline of teachers.
- Action must be taken on the recommendations made in research to attract and retain high quality teachers in NSW, particularly in rural, regional and remote schools, and hard to staff schools.

- Allow schools to fill long term temporary positions as permanent positions.
- Attract and retain teachers through rural, regional and remote incentives.

(e) teaching workforce conditions

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- Teaching workforce conditions can vary significantly between schools. This can contribute to the ability of schools to acquire and retain staff.
- Release from face-to-face teaching is provided for K-6 teachers for two hours per week. This is significantly less than the allocation for 7-12 teachers. The allocations have not changed since the 1980s and are inadequate to address the increase in compliance, accountability and workload.
- There are inequities in physical environments and resources such as the number and quality of classroom buildings, staff common rooms, staff toilet facilities et al. The experience of teachers working in aging classrooms with limited or inflexible spaces or demountable will vary markedly from those working in brand new, purpose built, contemporary and flexible learning spaces.
- The current enrolment policy means that in schools where the enrolment cap has been reached and the school is unable to consider out of area enrolments, teachers' children are required to enrol at other schools, meaning those teachers are unable to spend additional time on planning and preparation before and after school.

Possible Solutions:

- Provide additional time for teachers for planning and preparation to ensure that they can provide the best teaching and learning program for their students.
- Increase release from face-to-face teaching for planning and preparation from two hours per week to four hours per week, including additional release time for executive staff.
- Ensure that all school buildings and assets are fit for purpose and that all students and teachers have high quality learning environments that allow for excellent, contemporary education to be prioritised.
- Provide all teachers with the optimal resources to perform their role, including a laptop or device.
- Increase time and funding for staff wellbeing initiatives (findings in reports included in introduction).
- Relax the strict school enrolment zones for permanent teachers' children.
- Active and positive promotion of the teaching profession is another lever to attract and retain quality educators at all levels. Education is the key to the future aspirations of society.

(f) Initial Teacher Education

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- Tertiary institutions vary in the requirements for their teacher training courses. There needs to be an emphasis on maximising the time and effectiveness of preservice teachers' experience in classrooms to develop their awareness of effective teaching and learning.
- The rising cost of university degrees in Education mean that teachers begin their career with significant HECS debts. This is compounded by the lower salaries for teachers than other professions resulting in longer

term debt. In addition, practicum experience for pre-service teachers (for up to 8 weeks at a time) means forgoing part time work, which can mean a further financial disincentive for choosing an education career.

- Careers pathways and advice in high schools and other settings need to actively promote teaching as a worthy option for young people.

Possible Solutions:

- The DoE and its major stakeholders (PPA, SPC, NSWTF, P&C) require real input into how tertiary institutions prepare pre-service teachers to enter the profession. Tertiary providers need to collaborate as a system and partner with primary schools to ensure system wide improvements are developed.
- A robust and consistent internship program, with more rigorous measures of readiness to enter the profession is necessary. A focus on the practical aspects of teacher readiness, that aligns to contemporary classrooms and current curriculum requirements, is essential.
- Financial incentives to enter the teaching profession such as reduced HECS debts or scholarships. These could be linked to commitments to work in harder to staff schools once qualified. Expand scholarships to include employment as SLSOs as a pathway to teaching.
- Raising the status of the profession through a range of positive measures including the narrative put forward in the media by all stakeholders. As suggested in the [Report on the Quality of Initial Teacher Education Review, 2021, Recommendation 1](#), raising the status of the profession through a national recruitment campaign that 'should feature expert teachers and celebrate the positives of teaching'.

(g) impacts related to COVID-19, including the impact of government responses such as remote teaching and safety restrictions

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- The impact of Covid is not the only cause of teacher supply problems – they have just brought it into sharper focus. It has been an issue that schools have anticipated as RAM and other funds have been used to employ teachers to implement vital educational programs, particularly in disadvantaged schools. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers' retirement rates, burgeoning numbers of younger teachers leaving the profession due to workload and salary concerns and lower numbers of trainee teachers is reducing the available employment pool.
- During these Learning from Home periods, anecdotally many students were not able to engage in remote teaching to the same extent as face-to-face teaching, due to several factors including technology access, parental support and ability to learn independently.

Possible Solutions:

- School based covid safety restrictions should not exceed those imposed on the broader community.

(j) the impacts of the Staffing Agreement on the ability of principals to effectively staff schools and manage performance

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- Low socio economic and rural and remote schools often have difficulties attracting and maintaining staff. Despite an anecdotal understanding that principals often prefer local choice options to fill permanent vacancies, it is vital that any changes to the Staffing Agreement maintain a focus on supporting harder to staff schools.
- The ability to appoint long term temporary teachers to permanent is greatly valued by principals. They have been in your school, you know their skill/ability, you have invested in their development. This is currently a local choice option for all but 1-point schools.

- EPMI / TIP staffing is incredibly valuable to assist principals in managing performance issues.

Possible Solutions:

- Any changes to the Staffing Agreement should be negotiated with school-based stakeholders – DoE, NSWTF, NSWPPA, SPC, P&C.

(k) the administrative burden for principals associated with recruiting for and appointing roles

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- A significant issue in merit selection procedures is coordinating the various members of the panel – accessing representatives from staff, P&C, AECG, DEL rep, gender balance and sometimes others, then finding dates on which they can all participate. This can become a very time consuming and labour-intensive process.
- The recommendation of conducting merit selection short listing and interview processes outside school hours is usually unworkable – the time involved is too great. Panel members are already required to assess applications in their own time.
- Improvements to the TALEO recruitment system have reduced the number of steps from 21 to 8. Despite this, many principals still report difficulty in being able to use TALEO without support.
- Appointing long term temporary teachers to permanent greatly reduces the administrative burden of the selection process.
- The DoE Human Capital Management (HCM) program was tasked with identifying and developing ways to streamline and simplify the recruitment and onboarding processes for staffing in schools. In collaboration with key stakeholders a ‘roadmap’ was developed to implement solutions.

Possible Solutions:

- Action the solutions identified by the Human Capital Management (HCM) program to streamline and simplify staff recruitment and onboarding procedures.
- All schools be able to convert long term temporary staff to permanent roles as part of the suite of recruitment processes.

(l) the impact of central appointments prioritisation for teaching and principal roles

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- The NSWPPA believes that central appointments remain an important part of a state-wide staffing system, particularly to safeguard the needs of low socio-economic, hard to staff and rural and remote schools.
- On occasions, the semi-automated nature of the central appointment system can result in a teacher being appointed to a position which doesn’t suit the needs of the individual or the school. Schools are different and different people have skills suited to different contexts - it is not a matter of one size fits all.

Possible Solutions:

- Investigate contemporary options for central appointment. Including options such as running a selection panel from a small pool of applicants with the most service transfer points or from one of the priority teacher recruitment pools. Over time, this would maintain most of the desired incentive for teachers and schools alike.

(n) the impacts of incentives and the transfer point system on regional shortages

Impact on our members, students, and schools:

- The Association supports incentives and the transfer point system to address regional shortages. However, we believe the current incentives are not providing sufficient motivation to teachers and the transfer point

system seems less attractive than it was. Also, not all temporary and relieving staff have access to the incentives.

- Permanency is not the incentive or motivation that it once was to some teachers. The contemporary workforce desires flexibility, but our system has not kept pace with what appeals as an incentive.
- Teachers are choosing to accept temporary positions in schools that suit their current situation, family, and lifestyles, rather than seeking permanency.

Possible Solutions:

- Research the effectiveness of the existing incentives and adopt incentives that will attract and retain current and future teachers.

(o) the approval to teach process in New South Wales

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- The Association believes that every teacher employed in NSW must have appropriate educational qualifications and demonstrate quality teaching practice.
- Teachers from interstate and international settings may find the approval to teach process in NSW difficult. It is our understanding that these teachers, if approved, may be paid at the lowest salary level until their prior service is confirmed.
- Members of the Association also report that at times independent schools have offered positions to teachers prior to them finishing their training, especially in areas of short supply.

Possible Solutions:

- Prioritise tailored support to help international and interstate teachers navigate the NSW teacher approval process.
- Prioritise approaches to pre-service & graduate teachers to maximise uptake of jobs in NSW public schools.

(p) the impact of casualisation, temporary contracts and job insecurity

Impact on our members, students and schools:

- The NSWPPA supports all classroom positions being filled on a permanent basis and that all staffing allocations should be provided on a FTE basis. The NSWPPA also believes that it is important for principals to have flexibility to employ staff to meet the needs of specific programs and initiatives. For example, having multiple part-time temporary teachers to cover RFF allows teams of class teachers to be released at the same to work collaboratively on planning for learning. This would not be possible if one person was appointed permanently to the position.
- It is also our belief that giving principals the ability to permanently appoint long-term temporary teachers to vacancies would reduce workload. This has the added advantage of appointing a teacher that has already demonstrated their teaching ability within the school context.

Possible Solutions:

- The NSWPPA is keen to work collaboratively with the DoE to identify opportunities to provide more flexibility and incentives to fill permanent positions. It is the belief of the Association that what has worked for the current and past cohorts of teachers is not necessarily what will attract graduates and future teachers. It is our view that many of these teachers are looking for lifestyle incentives rather than permanency.

