

**Submission
No 121**

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Dr Rod Leonarder

Date Received: 30 July 2022

Submission to NSW Upper House Inquiry on Teacher Shortages in New South Wales

Author of Submission

Dr Rod Leonarder

Personal Background

From 1979 -2016, I was employed by the Department of Education (NSW) as a secondary teacher, Principal of two schools, a District Superintendent and a Director of school education networks in South Western Sydney. Post retirement in 2016, I have worked part time at the University of Notre Dame with both postgraduate and undergraduate students. I currently supervise tertiary education students as they undertake a school practicum. In my professional career I have also served as the state President of the English Teachers' Association (NSW).

Interest in Inquiry

The issue of teacher shortages is a major issue confronting the profession and society. The responses as voiced in the media are broad, but very few of these responses tackle in detail the declining numbers of male teachers entering the profession and their retention. For this reason, I have written this brief submission so that the issue of male teacher employment is part of the broad canvas of submissions captured by the Inquiry.

Submission - Issues relating to the Employment and Retention of Male Teachers

1. Large numbers of male teachers have retired from the education profession in the preceding fifteen years. These teachers are 'baby boomers' born in the late 1940s and 1950s. Their superannuation packages are tailored to retirement at 60 years of age.
2. The mass exodus of retiring male teachers from the profession, especially in secondary education in the public education sector, is unparalleled. (Statistical data is available from the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, NSW Department of Education).
3. Departing male teachers are not being replaced, in sufficient numbers, by younger male educators who view teaching as a lifetime career option.
4. Research (Burn & Pratt-Adams, 2015; Cruickshank, 2017) published in Australia and overseas has identified social isolation as a key issue impacting on male teacher welfare for those who enter and work in the profession. As numbers of male teachers decrease, there are less opportunities for males to receive mentoring, coaching and collegial support from fellow male teachers. This lack of support can have a dramatic impact on employed males who lack opportunities to interact with other groupings of males both in professional and social settings within their workplace.
5. Targeted programs addressing the needs and aspirations of male teachers in both recruitment and long-term retention need to be seen as a key priority in addressing teacher shortages.
6. One of the key dilemmas facing government and the profession is how to have newly recruited and pre-recruitment teachers view teaching as a lifetime career option. Incentives need to include additional scholarships, fast tracking of permanent positions, subsidised and purpose-built housing in difficult to staff areas, and extended opportunities for undertaking postgraduate study or research into education to build teaching and leadership skills sets.

Recommendations

1. Adopt a whole of government approach to addressing the issue of teaching shortages and its multiple threads.
2. Invite Dr Vaughan Cruickshank, from the University of Tasmania, who has undertaken and published research in relation to male teacher employment and retention, to provide a presentation to the NSW Legislative Council.
3. Find more ways to promote teaching as a lifelong career pathway and suitable profession for school leavers from among Australia's diverse multicultural communities.
4. Support more widespread initiatives to allow professionals from other professions to change career pathways and undertake accelerated tertiary training to be a teacher.
5. Create specific policies in all education and teacher employment sectors relating to the recruitment and retention of male teachers at all levels of the profession – early childhood, primary and secondary.
6. Fund through research grants to the tertiary education sector, specific research that addresses areas identified as contributing to teacher shortages. Ensure that any research has a designated thread that examines employment shortages outside the Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong nexus, and explores specific regional and rural contexts across the state.
7. Explore incentives, inclusive of 'term to whole year' set contracts, for bringing retired teachers of good standing back into the workforce.
8. Provide specific on the job mentoring and professional support from retired school leaders to newly appointed principals in isolated and difficult to staff areas. These significant newly appointed school leaders can be overwhelmed at times with issues impacting on school and staff welfare. A key priority must be to ensure that good leaders and future leaders do not leave the profession early suffering from burnout.
9. Invite the leadership of the state's major teacher professional learning associations to contribute in session to the committee and provide specialist insight into shortages as it applies to their specific curriculum areas and expertise.
10. Fund a tertiary education partnership with one or more universities that becomes a centre for teacher education excellence in the state. Provide a tertiary campus in a regional setting, or more than one regional setting, to support the initiative. Provide scholarships to successful applicants and give priority to those applicants who live in regional and rural NSW.

References

1. Burn, E. & Pratt-Adams, S. (2015) *Men Teaching Children 3-11: Dismantling Gender Barriers*, London: Bloomsbury, ebook.
2. Cruickshank, V. (2017) *Primary schools are losing more and more male teachers, so how can we retain them*, The Conversation, August 8.
3. Cruickshank, V. (2017) *The Challenges faced by male primary teachers*, PhD thesis, University of Tasmania.

29.7.2022