

Submission
No 129

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: NSW Productivity Commission

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The Hon. Mark Latham MLC
Chair, Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 3
Inquiry into teacher shortages in New South Wales
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Dear Mr Latham,

NSW Productivity Commission submission

I am writing as NSW Productivity Commissioner to provide this short submission to your Inquiry into teacher shortages in New South Wales. The Commission's views, including those in this submission, do not represent Government policy.

In May last year I released the *Productivity Commission White Paper 2021: Rebooting the Economy*, which is available at www.productivity.nsw.gov.au/white-paper. The *White Paper* identifies 60 opportunities to improve productivity across the state.

I wish to draw the Committee's attention to Chapter 2 of the *White Paper* which contains the Commission's research, conclusions, and recommendations on the important matters of teacher supply and quality. In particular, I would highlight recommendations 2.1, 2.2 and 2.6.

Treat teacher supply and quality as investment

Securing the teacher supply and quality NSW needs is a long-term project and needs a long-term plan. Just as in other Government decision making, the plan should consider a wide range of possible solutions and prioritise them based on their ability to achieve the desired objectives and maximise value for the community.

The NSW Government's recently-released *Teacher Supply Strategy 2021 – 2031* fulfils this recommendation. It takes a long-term view and considers a range of options, including innovative pilot programs. The strategy also commits to ongoing evaluation to ensure individual programs and pilots are achieving the anticipated benefits.

Recommendation 2.1

Apply the principles of capital investment to teacher supply and quality, evaluating new and existing initiatives, expenditure, and reforms in cost-benefit terms.

Before 2022, establish a long-term teacher supply strategy, based on cost-benefit principles, including a portfolio of evidence-based measures, and innovative pilot programs with built-in evaluation.

Broaden the sources of quality teachers

In addressing the teacher shortage, the *White Paper* recommends looking to new sources of teaching talent to complement traditional pathways. Accessing these sources will require identifying

and reducing barriers to entry into the teaching profession, focusing on *outcomes* rather than the length of training.

Employment-based pathways have been successful in other jurisdictions. For example, the Teach for Australia program has placed high quality teaching candidates into hard-to-fill positions in disadvantaged schools across Victoria, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, and Tasmania.

Similarly, expanding the use of existing 'conditional accreditation' provisions can unlock a valuable source of teaching skill in areas of need, while giving students more certainty about employment post-graduation.

The *Teacher Supply Strategy* commits to developing new mid-career pathways into teaching. One program is already being trialled that includes financial incentives and opportunity to work as a paraprofessional while training. The NSW Government also commissioned Teach for Australia to tailor a program for our State but it has not yet been piloted.

For some, a long and costly period of training will be enough to deter potential career changers, even if they are able to start working before graduation. As such, the Commission has initiated a detailed cost-benefit analysis of the lengthening of postgraduate initial teacher education requirements from a one-year Graduate Diploma to a two-year Master's. The results of this evaluation should be used to inform a decision on whether a one-year pathway is reintroduced.

Recommendation 2.2

Design and implement accelerated teaching pathways to increase the supply of quality teachers:

- *Pilot employment-based teaching pathways by 2021, targeting urgent teacher shortages in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM).*
- *Implement a program to recruit overseas qualified teachers, with appropriate evaluation and review built-in.*
- *Review the costs and benefits of the requirement for a two-year full-time equivalent master's program for teaching by 2021. Compare it with one-year full-time equivalent pathways.*
- *Within two years of the review, design and implement alternative accelerated pathways. Put in place regular monitoring and evaluation of teacher uptake and quality.*

These measures should eventually form part of the long-term teacher supply strategy described in Recommendation 2.1.

Help good teachers keep teaching

Retaining and fostering the skills of the existing workforce is an important complement to recruiting new teachers.

The *White Paper* recommends developing an 'instructional lead' career pathway for highly effective teachers. This would not only retain teaching talent that would otherwise seek career progression elsewhere (whether in administrative school leadership positions or outside schools altogether), but also make the career more attractive for prospective teachers.

Robust evaluation is central to the instructional lead pathway. Objective, transparent measures such as classroom observations, 360-degree feedback, and 'value-added' must be used to identify appropriate candidates for instructional leadership roles. The *White Paper's* Recommendation 2.4 also includes a range of related suggestions to enhance teachers' professional development.

Recommendation 2.6

Develop an 'instructional lead' career pathway for highly effective teachers as an alternative to an administrative career progression. Highly effective teachers should be identified using a suite of robust measures, as outlined in Recommendation 2.4.

Evaluate uptake, rollout, and effectiveness of these new pathways against implementation key performance indicators, with one instructional lead teacher in every school within three years.

Leverage instructional lead teachers to spread best practice across the school system through a Centre for Teaching Excellence (see Recommendation 2.5). Incorporate these teachers into a long-term teacher supply strategy (see Recommendation 2.1).

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. I think teachers are our education system's most valuable asset so I look forward to the Committee's report on this important topic.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Achterstraat AM
NSW Productivity Commissioner

5 August 2022