

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am writing in response to the teacher shortage which is affecting teachers, parents, and students. I write this submission as a full time classroom teacher in a government high school, who has seen the effects of these shortages first hand to my students and colleagues.

There have been recent pushes and demands by the Teacher's Federation to reduce workload, class sizes, and increase teacher pay to make the teaching profession more competitive and in line with other similar industries to encourage future generations to join the profession. These demands come with no solutions, and continue to drive a wedge between teachers who choose to undertake industrial action, and those who do not.

Whilst this piece does not discuss or provide resolutions to the current issues in the government system surrounding the prevalence of vacant permanent positions, it does provide recommendations on how teachers can feel valued in regards to pay, more planning time, professional development time, and consequently better outcomes and behaviours for their students.

The cap on annual classroom teacher pay without further career progression (e.g. without progressing to head teacher, assistant principal, deputy principal, principal, director, etc) sits at around \$110,000 as of 2022, a figure which puts teachers at better than the top 10% of income earners in the country. This can be seen by many as a generous salary for professionals who are accountable for their work for 40 weeks a year. Whilst teachers grow extremely exhausted from this argument by those who may be perceived as discrediting the hard work that goes into teaching, it's important to know that the statement of teachers "working for 40 weeks a year" merely focuses on accountability (as many teachers may argue they are sufficiently working over the school holidays).

When employees are not held accountable for 8 weeks paid work a year, this leads to inequity in employee productivity, and to a more serious extent, inequitable outcomes for students where the teaching profession is concerned. The pay demands from the Teacher's Federation in proposing a pay increase for teachers in line with other similarly qualified professionals can best be met in the following simple way:

- Teachers are to work 48 paid weeks a year, like all other professions.

In writing this piece, I will discuss how this can be best achieved, taking into account leave rights such as annual leave, and duties such as planning, programming, and meeting the professional development hours as mandated by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

Teachers are overworked, and have not been provided with the opportunity to plan and implement teaching programs within their paid weekly hours. Whilst teacher paid hours sit at 37 hours per week, it's uncommon for any professional industry to be working at only their weekly paid hours. This is a systematic issue (which indeed should be addressed) surrounding many industries, which is a completely separate issue and cannot be used as a problem with the teaching profession. This is an issue which can be simply solved by mandating teachers to work on site with their colleagues during the school holiday periods. Giving teachers a pay rise to bring us in line with every other professional industry should be conditional on teachers demonstrating their work over the school holiday period. In doing so there will be sufficient collegial planning, programming, professional development and report writing time which will serve to alleviate teachers of these duties during the term which have been taking them away from the classroom physically and mentally.

The benefits are not limited to curriculum programming and NESA mandated professional development, but can also extend to collegial planning surrounding behavioural and support strategies for students on a teacher's class roll in the two weeks leading up to term 1 (from mid January). High school teachers can use this time reviewing incoming students from primary school and how to best plan for their effective learning and well-being, and primary school teachers can prepare for the handover.

To address class size issues, John Hattie stated in a professional development we did earlier this year, that class size is a non issue when behavioural problems are tackled. This is true for me from a subjective perspective, but is well researched by Hattie himself.

In lieu of teachers having to take a mandatory 4 weeks annual leave in the same time period every year, they can be granted an additional 2 weeks a year to take off during school holiday periods so long as they meet yearly professional development requirements.

This is a solution which will benefit both students and teachers, which does not add to the teachers' currently workload. It will increase productivity and student outcomes, as well as address the teacher shortage by showing that teaching is a financially appealing option for future generations. Furthermore, with the perception that all teachers are working throughout the year, it will remove the stigma associated with teachers having "time off every 10 weeks". Opposition to this proposition by individuals or the Teachers Federation will be a concession to this stigma.

In closing, the recommendation I have given, as a qualified, full time classroom teacher to work 46 weeks a year, benefits the profession greatly by contributing to better outcomes for students, more attraction to the profession due to better conditions and higher pay, and less teachers feeling overworked and burnt out during the school term.