

Submission  
No 152

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 4 July 2022

---

Partially  
Confidential

# Teacher Shortage Submission

To the Teacher Shortage Inquiry,

I would like to explain some of the ways that the teacher shortage and the inability for schools to get teachers has impacted me and the schools that I have worked at over the last five to six years.

## **This submission will cover;**

2010- initial teacher training and lack of classroom management for teacher training. Plus comments on the experience of a teacher who retrain from industry.

2017- I did a full time load in an area that I was untrained in and managed classes in at least three other subjects across years 7-12 in other classes that I am also untrained in.

2019- Full load plus Chemistry year 11 for the first time.

2019- Full time load plus year 12 Chemistry for the first time plus Science Extension for the first time.

2020- 2 x classes year 11 Engineering, Year 12 Engineering both for the first time, plus Science Extension. Initially teaching one year 11 class of Engineering while also teaching a full science load. Plus managing a year 9 Engineering class that I was not teaching. Mentored an HSIE teacher while they taught a full load of science for at least two terms.

2017-2018- Completed a degree to enable me to teach Engineering.

2019- After almost two years of back and forth with EdConnect managed to get my codes approved for Engineering

2020 and 2021- The impact of covid on the teaching workforce.

I work in a metropolitan school in Sydney. I teach science and I now teach Engineering. I entered the teaching profession after ten years in the pharmaceutical industry. I was science trained and had used that training in my industry related job. To become a teacher I took a substantial paycut. I did that because I was hoping to have flexibility and time to spend with my children during their school holidays and occasionally after school. I took on this role knowing that I would not get all my holidays or from 3pm off, but thinking that I would get some flexibility to spend time with my family.

I started working casually and in temp contracts as a teacher in 2010. Teachers who come into the teaching workforce out of industry get no recognition of their prior experience when they start teaching and in fact, it can often be difficult to come to teaching later in life as it means that opportunities like those working in rural schools are not available as those teachers already have set and established relationships, children and potentially other family commitments including schools that their children go to. If I knew and understood now what I was leaving when I left my previous profession, I would not change to a teaching career. I took the pay cut and ended up doing way more work and having much less flexibility than I did in my previous career. I love working with students, but I am always wondering how long it will be before I decide to go back to my previous career simply to reduce the workload.

My early years as a teacher were challenging. I did not feel that my initial teacher education prepared me for the classroom behaviour management that I would need. Stand out events include; a student that went after my head teacher with a hammer because they were told to put their phone away, fights in the playground, including one particular incident where a student used me as a body shield to stop another student from hitting them. The other student didn't stop so I was hit multiple times; difficulty controlling students in a classroom, one student shining a lazer into my eyes and students doing things like climbing out the windows. The school I was at did a wonderful job helping and supporting me through these experiences and my ability to manage a classroom improved drastically.

In 2017, I taught at [redacted]. At that time, as there were no Industrial Arts casual and temp teachers available I was employed to take on a single term temp contract as an Industrial Arts teacher replacing the teaching load of the previous head teacher and part of the load of the teacher who would be doing the head teacher job. I had already done a number of short term temporary contracts in Industrial Arts as I was trained in managing students in practical subjects, science, and I had hobbies that included wood work, sewing, cooking and a number of other subjects that could easily transfer across into the TAS field.

Half way through the term, the teacher acting as head teacher in the TAS faculty got a job in a school closer to home. So he left. This meant that another temp teacher was needed. My contract was extended until the end of the year as we had still not filled the initial position and now another position also needed to be filled. Later that same term another Industrial Arts teacher also got another job. On top of that, the remaining trained Industrial Arts teacher was due to go on long service leave for the whole of term 2 and 3. This had been pre-approved months prior to the change in staff and needed to continue.

Within weeks, I found myself and the most experienced teacher in the Industrial Arts staffroom. We still had TAS teachers in the other staffroom. These teachers were trained in hospitality, food tech and computer subjects. I was the only teacher who had any knowledge about the industrial arts side of TAS. So, I had no qualifications in TAS and I was trying to keep afloat a faculty that had one year 12 Timber class, one year 12 Design and Tech class, one year 12 Engineering class, one year 11 Timber class, one year 11 Construction class, one year 11 Design and Tech class, one year 11 Engineering class plus year 10 timber, engineering, design and tech classes and the same for year 9 and technology mandatory classes in both years 7 and 8.

We did this by converting the year 11 construction class to a timber class and putting me on the year 12 timber class, both year 11 timber classes and one year 9 timber class and a year 10 timber class. In addition, I ran at least one of each of the year 7 and 8 technology mandatory classes, the ones that covered timber. I also supported the casual teacher, who was taking the design and tech classes who had no TAS training, or relevant training for the subject. In addition, I supported a physics teacher who was teaching Engineering. These two subjects have a lot of similarities, so this teacher needed less support. I had been teaching for around 6 years by this time and still not been offered a permanent position anywhere.

During this time, I spent every school holidays trying to learn timber working techniques off youtube before I taught them. I also spent my holidays coming in to allow extra working time for the year 11 and 12 timber students to complete their work. Where possible we got

teachers to come in on a casual basis to support me and to teach specific techniques. But, it wasn't the same as having a fully qualified teacher in the role full time. We did get one timber teacher who could come in a few days a week for a couple of months. We did not get anyone with skills in Design Tech or Engineering, other than the temp teachers already there and myself, none of whom had any training in this area.

While all of this was happening, I undertook a third degree at Newcastle University so enable me to teach Engineering. I had seen how badly the lack of TAS teachers was an issue and as I had been unable to get a permanent position in the 10 years that I had been teaching, I hoped that this may be a way to get me into a permanent position. I looked for training in timber and design tech as these were my preferred options, but there was none readily to be found and although I wrote and spoke to EdConnect on multiple occasions they could not direct me to relevant training and often did not respond to either my phone calls or my emails. I emailed EdConnect repeatedly over this year and a couple of subsequent years. The most I got was one email response acknowledging my email and saying that they would get back to me. They never did.

During all of this, we still needed to manage the younger students. I wrote workbooks for every single class in timber, design tech, engineering and electronics. I was not trained in any of this and it is doubtful that my workbooks would have been as good as they should have been. But, I had very little time to do all of this, I was already overloaded and I needed to find a way to make sure that I could help support teachers at every level. The head teacher that was put in charge of TAS was a head teacher admin with skills in HSIE not in TAS. So, although he did a brilliant job as our head teacher he was not able to help me with providing content and knowledge to the casual teachers who were involved in the role. He was able to help me with writing the reports for all of these classes but not for setting and marking assessment tasks.

This went on for two terms. At the end of term three we had the teacher who was on long service leave return and one of the other teachers who had left had decided that they were not happy at their new school and they also returned. By this time, I had taught enough TAS that I could get my codes for Technology Mandatory so officially, I was no longer a teacher working outside of their area for the junior classes. I was still working in an area that I was untrained in for the senior classes.

Unsurprisingly, I burned out and I decided at the end of the year that I could no longer continue working at that school. They had been very supportive, but I needed to change schools and I needed to wind down what I was doing. So, I moved schools at the end of the year and started a new school first day back the next year.

For the next year, I worked at \_\_\_\_\_, another inner metro school and I worked part time. At this time, I continued to complete my degree so that I could teach Engineering. When I came to finalising my degree and working with Edconnect to add Engineering codes to my qualifications it was a big issue. I had decided not to do the scholarship because I knew that there were schools around where I lived that were currently looking for Engineering teachers. The scholarship mandated going to a school in the Western suburbs once I finished my degree. I decided to pay for the degree myself so that I would have the choice on where to teach at the end of the degree. However, staffing did not

recognise the degree, even though it was exactly the same one as they were offering as a scholarship. When I queried if I would be able to get my codes for Engineering if I did the scholarship I was told yes. When I pointed out that it was exactly the same degree but I was not being paid for it, it didn't matter. This eventually went to the Minister and I had to fight for another 18 months. I was told that I would need to do extra unpaid practicals to get my codes. However, I was not a teacher that didn't have TAS codes, I already had them due to my time at where I had taught a full year in TAS and multiple other shorter engagements that worked out as well over two years of work in the TAS fields. Eventually, I sent in my initial paperwork, that the Department already had a copy of, plus evidence of the further six months that I had done in TAS. This was deemed enough experience to give me my Engineering Codes. This whole process ended up taking almost 2 years and I still have panic attacks when I try to contact EdConnect. The lack of flexibility around some of these processes for those who have relevant experience and qualifications is astounding.

After I had worked at for a number of years I finally became permanent. Even this process took a considerable amount of time. My foot required surgery. Long hours of standing and walking and shoes that have to meet WHS requirements had done damage to my foot. As a result, my foot was broken during the time that I did my interview. This necessitated me acknowledging this in my onboarding paperwork. As a result, I had to go through disability provisions to be employed. As my situation was not urgent it was not a priority. So, my onboarding took 5 months and 24 days instead of a couple of weeks. Even then, I had to get letters from my doctor and surgeon to say that I no longer needed support or it would have taken even longer.

I was employed at a science teacher at . However, it soon became apparent that I would have both TAS and science classes as did not have enough TAS teachers. So, I ended up taking over a year 9 Engineering class. The next year I was due to take on a year 11 Engineering class as well. However, the main Engineering teacher resigned to take up employment at a different school.

My Principal and the Department tried to find another Engineering Teacher. I had one year 11 Engineering class plus a science load that meant that I was teaching to maximum capacity. Until we had a new Engineering teacher I was also writing material for a year 12 Engineering class, another year 11 Engineering Class two year 10 Engineering Classes and a year 9 Engineering class. The year 10 Engineering classes had some untrained teachers, science and in other areas of TAS on them, so I didn't have to do much for those classes, but I did have to oversee them and make sure that they were running well.

Unsurprisingly, I was not happy at once again being in a position where I was taking on extra classes. Not only was I writing material for these classes, I was setting their classes and I was writing their reports, setting their assessment tasks and doing all of their marking. This meant that I was effectively doing a 1.6 load, for an entire term.

At the end of that term, when I got to a point where I felt I could no longer continue, I was taken off the science load and put onto the Engineering load. However, this was the first time that I had ever taught senior Engineering. So, although I was an experienced teacher, and I had the codes for teaching Engineering, this was new to me and it meant that I was on an

extremely high load and a very steep learning curve. This was after I had spent a year on Chemistry teaching year 11 and 12 the previous two years, a course that I had never taught before, I had always been a Biology teacher. Then, I had taken on the Science Extension Course, also the previous year. So, by the time I got to Engineering, I had taught a new year 12 subject three years in a row. I had had one year with no senior classes when I first started at \_\_\_\_\_, the year previous to that I had taught Timber at Cumberland. Prior to that, I had mostly taught Biology. All this meant that I was often teaching senior classes for a first time, I was not becoming familiar with any syllabus and I was always having to do the extreme level of work that teaching a senior class for the first year requires.

Last year, as I taught Engineering for the first time I also undertook my second Science Extension course. This is a high load with senior classes. It is incredibly high when I was also taking on two year 11 classes on top of the year 12 classes. But, we don't have anyone else that can take either the Science Extension load or the Engineering load. So, when I was moved mostly into the Engineering load, I gave up my science load of juniors, but not my Science Extension load. However, we were not able to replace me as a science teacher. There were no science teachers available. After another term of other science teachers setting my previous science load I realised that one of the new teachers, was preparing all of the work for a year nine class. She had taken my GATs class and the class that she had initially been taking was being taught by casual teachers. This brand new teacher was setting the work for this class every day. She was a newly out teacher. She didn't know her own craft let alone the difference between a standard class and a GATs class. So, she had no idea what level to set the work. As a result the class was rapidly going down hill. I spoke with the head teacher and we set up a number of strategies so that we could manage the class. This included me and another teacher setting the work and helping to manage the casual teachers. We did this until we were able to get an HSIE trained teacher to take on the science load. I then mentored the HSIE teacher through the year. This seems like me doing a lot of stuff. I am only talking from my perspective. Throughout all of this, my head teacher and the 2IC were overwhelmed with the work that they were doing due to other shortages and due to the impact of Covid.

This year, we still can't get another Engineering Teacher. We now have enough Science Teachers, but at the end of the year one of our science teachers goes on maternity leave which puts us up in the air again. We do not have enough TAS teachers in other areas and we are about to lose another TAS teacher, potentially two TAS teachers. I am exhausted and I don't know how long I can keep doing this for. None of this includes the impact of normal day to day schooling. None of this really demonstrates the level of exhaustion I and other teachers feel when we take on these hugely inflated roles year after year. None of this shows the impact that this has on my career and career aspirations, or the choices that I would like to make about what training I would like to do. I have worked as a year adviser for the last four years. I also have other roles in the school including that of ARCO and of Aboriginal student mentor and cultural adviser. I would like to move into welfare but I can't get time to do the PL that I would like to do and there is no way that my Principal or head teacher would want to take me out of the classroom more than I already am because they can't get teachers to fill the position that I am in. In 18 months time I am salary sacrificing to have a year off. It will be difficult for the school to fill my position at this time and they may not be able to at all.

Over the last few years our school has had an increasing difficulty filling teacher positions on a day to day basis when teachers are ill and on an ongoing basis. Daily, we have multiple classes on minimum supervision. We often also have combined classes. There have been rotations where I have done up to eight overload classes on a rotation because we have been unable to get teachers in. This is particularly difficult in a field like TAS where practical projects don't get done if you don't have an appropriate teacher in the classroom. This was made worse by Covid, but it was coming our way anyway.

Teachers are also much more aware now of not coming to school if they are unwell. This is important, but it means an even bigger stress on other teachers. This has a knock on effect as teachers are becoming increasingly stressed which results in them taking even more time off as they are sick. We feel guilty whenever we take time off, but the workload is so overwhelming that we have to take a break.

Covid created extra pressures on teachers in the workforce. Despite knowing that it was coming there is a big difference between knowing that you are suddenly going to be working online and then having that experience.

On the day that we first went online we were called down down to the hall and were told that the school was only going to take in the students of essential workers. All other students would be told to go home if at all possible. We were then told that we would have half an hour to get ready to teach online. Many of us already had some of our classwork up on Google Classroom, but this was a huge ask, particularly for those of us who were teaching subjects with a practical component. We had to reorganise what we were doing, figure out all of our processes, figure out how much and of what students could take in of this format, work out what sorts of rotations we would need to do to keep the school open etc. The list kept on going.

We did manage to get the practicalities working for day to day teachers. For those of us who were good with computer skills this was easier to do. For the many older teachers this level of computing skill was difficult to manage and extremely challenging. For students who did not have computer and internet access managing to get appropriate work to those students was problematic and often intense for both the student and teacher. We had teachers who went to students houses to drop equipment off.

After a week or so, as year adviser it was one of my jobs to contact our more at risk students and see if they needed any extra support. The students that were known to be most at risk were contacted regularly by our counselors, these were the students who may be suicidal, who were known to be seriously depressed, who had other serious mental health problems such as borderline personality disorder, bipolar disorder, eating disorders etc. If a student had learning support needs then the learning support team contacted them and the year advisers only contacted them if they needed specific help that the learning support team could not provide.

The next level of students was looked after by the head teacher Welfare. She contacted students that had known anxiety problems but were not at the level where it was thought that counsellors would be needed. Year Advisers took the next level down. However, often we

were the first people who contacted students that a teacher had noticed were not engaging in classes or who a teacher referred to us because they thought something may be wrong.

During my time responding to these situations I was talking everyday to a variety of students and their parents that needed a huge amount of support. Stand outs include, talking to a mother who answered her phone when she was standing on the top of her apartment building trying to decide if she was going to jump or not. She did not, but I spoke to her for over two hours before I was able to convince her to call LifeLine and get the help that she needed from someone qualified to give that help. Numerous students who were refusing to do work because of anxiety, numerous parents who needed support as much as their child did. Students in higher lockdown areas where I could hear the helicopters over their houses. The helicopters were there all the time and the students and their families were getting signs of PTSD from the constant noise and drone of the helicopters. Parents that were terrified of bringing their child back to school because the family had people who were severely immunocompromised in the family and other family members that didn't want them to be put at risk. The list went on. Each day, I had to be careful how many of the higher needs students I was going to call and make sure to space them out with the lower needs students so that the emotional impact that I was experiencing could be managed. Although, I was supposed to be dealing with the lower needs cases as the number of higher needs cases exploded the number of cases that the counselors and head teacher were managing needed to be pushed further down the line onto year advisers because there was no one else who could do that work. Yet, at the same time, we had to run our own classes.

The second time was easier but changes in what was available from the Department again meant that we had to make sudden changes or do sudden training that we weren't expecting and that once again had to be implemented in a short space of time. Even the other day, we are suddenly being told that we will no longer have access to Zoom which we have been using for all of our online work. This happened just as we moved into the holidays. Teachers that had missed class time during term because of covid and wanted to support their classes online over the holidays were suddenly having to shift from zoom to Teams or some other platform so that they could do this support. When the Department make a decision it may make sense to them, it may be a sound financial decision, but the impact and the time that it takes for us to make those changes can be profound. People making those decisions don't realise how many thousands of people have to make sudden decision and how that impacts teachers, students and parents when those decisions come through. Those decisions may be simple on paper but the knock on effects are huge.