

Submission
No 153

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Teacher shortages in NSW – submission

Why I do not want to teach anymore...

I am a leader in mathematics education in NSW. I began teaching in mid 2014, became a Head Teacher in 2017 and moved onto school-based teacher professional learning whilst also teaching in 2020. I have led faculties and schools in improving outcomes for students, evidenced by significant impact on student learning, community trust and progression towards Premier's Priorities. I work in a rural, coastal area that should not struggle for teachers. I have also seen the impact of the teacher shortages in many schools.

I have seen schools who have rolling casuals or collapsed classes for an entire teaching load. They just cannot get someone to take the contract or apply for a permanent position.

I have seen positions be readvertised multiple times with no applications submitted. This is not the case for teacher positions only, this includes Head Teacher positions as well.

I have seen students disappointed that they must, again, be on minimal supervision instead of getting an education.

I have had students say, 'Hey miss, you know you were the only teacher I had all last week.'

I have seen behavioural issues and bullying increase exponentially as students' days become increasingly unstructured and educationally limited.

I have seen a significant increase in extreme behaviour with multiple teachers being assaulted by students, needing to go to hospital, reconsidering the profession. Teachers that would have never thought they would be assaulted at school. Now, it is the norm.

I have seen parents concerned and anxious about their child's education. Sometimes they are supportive of the school and sometimes their anxiety results in aggression toward school staff.

I have seen attendance go backwards because why come to school if you are going to sit in the playground all day.

I have seen fantastic school-based programs fail or stall due to lack of staffing. Programs that have shown quick and significant impact on student learning and wellbeing.

I have seen well intentioned departmental programs fail due to lack of staffing.

I have seen corporate staff burnt out from supporting schools to covering classes.

I have assisted in covering classes, along with other teachers, when there is just no one else to take them even on minimal supervision. This was not caused by COVID absences. It rarely is where I am based.

I have seen schools have a total of one casual to hire each day to cover teacher absences. There just is not anyone else available.

I have seen terrible teachers lose their positions due to misconduct only to be hired again by another school because there is no one else available.

I have seen fantastic teachers have career opportunities pulled from them. Their principal will not release them as there is no one to fill their position.

I have seen private schools poach public school teachers by offering increased pay.

I have seen our best teachers reconsider teaching.

I have seen our best teachers broken.

I have seen our best teachers leave.

This just scrapes the surface.

I love teaching. I did not leave because I fell out of love. I left because I had to for my own health. Every day I went to school to give everything to the students and teachers that I care for. Though every day I saw broken teachers and students let down by a system that is not acknowledging and doing something about the problem. I left because I still felt an obligation to do better for teachers and students and, in the position, I was in, I could not affect the systemic change needed. I needed to find a career path that could potentially end with me in a position to make change. Teaching was not it. No one listens to teachers.

I am concerned that, if the teacher shortage is fixed, there will be an influx of teachers with minimal experience and limited support for them to build skills around high impact strategies. I am concerned for the skills of our future adults as they are currently getting a sub-par education, not because of the teachers but because there just is not even a teacher there. I am concerned for everyone's mental health. I am concerned for the police force who will be trying to manage the increase in behaviour issues we are seeing in our future adults. I am concerned that there will be an even bigger divide between public and private education. I am concerned that it has been let go so far, if actions were taken today, it would take us a decade to get back to where we should be.

I love public schools and I never considered my kids going anywhere else. Recently though, I have talked to my husband about our children going to a private school. Not because public school teachers are not as good as private school teachers. All the best teachers I know are from public schools. No, it is for the sole reason that it may help to ensure they actually have a teacher.

It would be uncharacteristic of me to talk about a problem without providing a suggestion on how to fix it. Teachers need

1. Increased pay to improve the perception of teaching
2. Extensive administration support in all faculties
3. Department-led, faculty based ongoing professional learning engrained in school timetables - this can also support teacher autonomy while maintaining departmental oversight in quality
4. Increased leadership development
5. Politicians and media to stop demoting the teaching profession – we really need to have positive news stories, they are everywhere, you just need to look.