

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

## Inquiry into Teacher Shortages – NSW Legislative Council

I am a high school teacher (currently on sick leave) employed full time by the NSW DoE. I have held this role for the last 26 years.

During my career I have noted not only a decline in accepted learning standards (for example, year 12 students who are unable to compose a sentence or paragraph) but also a steady decline in how teachers are regarded by the general public (teachers have so many holidays, enjoy a short working day etc). NESA virtually hand over an HSC to any student regardless of their approach to learning or achievements. Over time teachers have been expected to ‘absorb’ a number of changes to working conditions which is partly the reason so many teachers have left the profession. Teachers must maintain teaching standards, pay to have accreditation recognised and jump through every hoop imaginable and have had to relinquish any autonomy while deciding how to teach. John Hattie’s writing is the current flavour of the month. None of these ‘fads’ have worked. Teachers seem to have become the scapegoats for a failing education system over which they have no control or input.

Long before the onset of COVID 19 and mandates, my school in south-west Sydney experienced the daily difficulty of hiring day to day casual teachers. Casual teachers all told the same story – they could pick and choose where to go each day and noted that unless they had no other choice would they bother coming to a school like mine where student behaviour was sometimes extreme and their motivation to learn, low. Support structures were not always in place for casual teachers at my school. They were not supported when students misbehaved and were not encouraged to attempt any real teaching. Casual teachers now are often considered little more than overqualified baby sitters rather than qualified, experienced professionals.

After COVID hit along with lockdowns and learning from home came along, I believe that for some teachers, this was the death knell of their career. My observation is that the education system had been running on the thinning ‘fumes’ of teacher goodwill for a number of years but this virus, the added difficulty of working from home while continuing to jump through hoops (we continued our teacher observation group timetable online, maintained accreditation, made multiple phone calls to parents checking in on student learning, navigated zoom, google classroom, staff, faculty and group meetings after hours, professional reading, teaching classes etc) hastened collective exhaustion and brought into our consciousness the notion of the futility of it all. It became difficult to identify anything we were expected to do which made a real and positive impact on the learning and wellbeing of our students. Goodwill can only stretch so far...

Remuneration is also an issue. Teachers are university educated professionals who work long hours beyond their time in the classroom. They maintain currency by completing endless courses online and in person, are often bullied by colleagues and their employer and suffer personal, sometimes physical attacks and threats from students. Add to this ever-increasing workloads – many of these tasks seem to lack purpose (busy work) – and mainstream media ‘flogging’ us and our reputations, teachers have fewer reasons to remain in the classroom. Surely we deserve to be paid an amount equivalent to educated professionals in other fields?

Mandates have prevented a huge proportion of the teaching workforce from going to work and have further exposed acute teacher shortages. Mandates have also created divisions between colleagues and placed increased and unnecessary burdens on teachers who remain in classrooms. Between collapsed classes, increased teacher absenteeism, stress and workloads teachers have been pushed to the brink. Permanent teachers are now being cast in the role of ‘overqualified babysitter’

when things are so dire that a warm body in the classroom will suffice. It seems that the NSW government is satisfied with providing sub-standard education rather than having uncompliant teachers in classrooms. They seem to believe that the students of NSW are better served by being in collapsed classes and being sent home early rather than benefiting from having their own experienced teacher who is passionate about education in classrooms.

Mr Latham, thank you again for all you have done thus far and for your continued efforts on behalf of the educators and students of NSW.

Sincerely,