

**Submission
No 184**

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Miss Siobhan Maloy

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I am a teacher. I have been teaching for 12 years in public primary schools. I started teaching because I love sharing knowledge with the kids and watching their 'light bulb moments'. Currently though, I only seem to teach for about 5% of the time and my passion for the job is waning. Why do I think there is currently a teacher shortage?

We are expected to enter so much data just to prove what we are doing - why aren't we just trusted to do our jobs? When I first started teaching (remember it was only 12 years ago!) there was a lot less data entry and a lot more teaching. I was teaching my class 5 days a week, every week. Now I'm lucky to see my class twice a week! A day off to enter PLAN data, a day off to attend professional learning on the next lot of data entry, a day off to write milestones, annual reflections, improvement measures, professional development plans, individualised education plans, personal learning plans... When do we teach?

We are expected to cop abuse from parents because their children do not know values that should have been taught by the parents - how can we teach a child everything it takes to be a human when we have the children for 6 hours a day and the parents have them for 18 hours? Yes, we embed these values in our teaching, but we do not have time to teach them with such a jam-packed curriculum. The "3 R's of teaching – Reading, Writing, Arithmetic – have become Resilience, Respect and Responsibility.

We are expected to go above and beyond teaching the six key learning areas and all we seem to cop is more complaining - choir, sport, debating, public speaking, coding.. These are not my forte - I have to learn to teach my students these things. Then I spend my own time writing permission notes, collecting permission notes, organising medical lists and kits, booking buses, running trials, navigating parents complaining about their child not making the team. Again, more days off class to attend debating competitions, athletics carnivals (school, zone, regional) – another day, another teacher out of the school. Do the benefits of these extracurricular activities outweigh the benefits of having a teacher in the classroom? Surely it is the role of a parent to provide these extracurricular activities to their child outside of school.

We are expected to adapt to all situations. During the recent COVID-19 lockdowns, we were 'essential workers'. We were relied upon to keep doing our job whilst the rest of the country came to a standstill. Most teachers had to learn to use platforms such as Google Classroom and Teams - we tried our best to adapt our whole methodology into something unprecedented, without warning, without guidance. Some schools were using online learning, some schools were using hard copy packs, some schools were using a combination, some schools were using Zoom. What did we receive instead of 'thanks for learning to do your job a totally different way in a week'? We received "Why aren't you using Zoom like _____ school?", "My child is falling behind because of this", "Where is the extension work?", "I don't appreciate my child being asked to take photos of their work to submit when they don't have a phone to take photos with". How demoralising!

We are expected to spend time away from our families to attend camps - did you know that teachers don't receive anything extra for this? No extra money, no time off in lieu, no RDO. On our most recent camp, one child split her head open in the middle of the night so we ended up having to take a taxi to the nearest emergency department. After only

four hours sleep, we were expected to get up the next day and continue the camp - continue supervising 80 children with just four hours sleep!

Just to get a permanent position is an absolute joke! There is a teacher shortage at the moment because of the vaccine mandate, but normally, there is not a teacher shortage (except in the country) - there are temporary and casual teachers everywhere that are desperate for a permanent position! It takes about a week to write a new resume for every job that we apply for and it takes a ridiculous amount of applications to actually get a job. My current position is 120 km from my house. I know plenty of people in the same position. Can't you just put in a transfer? Yes, I have one in but at the moment, they are taking about 7 years to go through! So now I drive for an hour and a half to get to work, "teach" my 9am-3pm job and then drive an hour and a half to get home. Some days I'm so tired that I have to pull over in a rest stop and have a sleep!

Yes, we get four lots of "holidays" a year - we spend this time planning for the next term, writing reports, completing mandatory training, learning new skills.. and resting because we are tired from dealing with the children who think it is okay to muck up at school and from dealing with the parents who think it's okay to take everything out on the teachers.

My love for the profession is dwindling rapidly. We were the ones that were relied upon during COVID to keep doing our jobs - "essential workers" - yet we don't get paid as if we are essential. Is it any wonder that teachers are leaving the profession after just five years? I knew coming into teaching, that the pay was minimal. For me, I need to love my job, not so much the pay packet. But the pay needs to match the effort and the disparity in this regard is huge.

These are just some of the many reasons why teachers are leaving the career.

So what are some possible solutions?

- Reduce the data entry. We spend some much time inputting data that we do not even have time to use the data to inform anything.
- Support teachers. Teachers are professionals and deserve to be treated as such. Someone needs to start calling parents out on their behaviours.
- Stop the endless stream of extracurricular activity expectations. These need to be moved outside of the school setting.
- Start paying time in lieu, RDOs or overtime for school camps and excursions outside of school hours.
- Start paying teachers for the time that they work.
- Overhaul the job application process. Just because some can write a fantastic resumé or can speak well in an interview does not mean that they can teach!
- Each school should have at least two teachers who are not on class to maintain the school plan and other such required documentation. They should take this load on themselves and not put added pressure onto teachers.
- Each school should have at least 2-3 teaching assistants or school learning support officers to assist with photocopying, laminating, playground duty, student behaviours.
- Funding should be provided for students who have been diagnosed with ANY disorder or difficulty that could effect their learning.

Together, we can make the next generation fantastic but we need support.