

**Submission
No 185**

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr David Maccormick

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Background:

I am a NSW state high school teacher of 25 years. I started teaching as a science teacher in 1997. In 2001, I retrained in response to a need for industrial arts teachers. It was a 6-month, full time program paid at my current rate of pay – i.e. I did not have to sacrifice any salary to gain the skills to teach in a new area, nor did I have to juggle teaching and learning at the same time. I cannot be sure, but I believe the same program now requires teachers to conduct this training while teaching. This is a big call, particularly if you are also a parent. In my opinion this is hardly a motivation to retrain. After training I filled roles in both science and industrial arts for the 16 years. Over the last 2 years I have taught solely in Industrial arts as faculty members have retired and not been replaced.

I recently applied for term 4 of this year as long service leave. This is after my current year 12 students have completed their studies. I have significant amounts of long service leave but despite ample notice the principle had to deny my request. This was done on the grounds that I cannot be replaced with a qualified industrial arts casual teacher. I understand the principal's position but there is nothing to say that I might not be sick during the same period or could have left the profession. What then?

What I find of considerable concern is that despite working in a fantastic school in the beautiful Blue Mountains we cannot staff our faculty with a qualified casual teacher. Every time a member of the faculty is sick, is on excursion, is on long service leave, is on FACS leave or emergency service leave our classes are not taught as they should be.

As an owner builder I pay my carpenter \$450/day, my plumber \$600/ day and my electrician \$750/ day. If they worked the same 205-day year teachers work they would earn in the range of \$92250 - \$153,750 per year. In reality they probably work closer to 250 days a year, exceeding the wage of a teacher on the top salary scale. Why be a teacher?

My son is studying maths/science at university. He dearly wants to teach high school mathematics. However, as a budding mathematician he looks at the price of housing and the prospect of salary growth over time and really needs to consider his desire to teach. There is no shortage of careers that will pay him more than teaching for his skills, with solid opportunity for salary growth.

Mining is a hot, uncomfortable, dangerous, physically demanding and lonely profession. This is a profession my son's mate (qualified plumber) has recently chosen to engage in. After 2 weeks of training he is working 7 days on 7 days off for \$150,000 at the age of 22. If I was 30 and was working in some western Sydney schools I know this would be a pretty tasty carrot to chase.

My profession is demanding in so many ways but I love it and I would not choose another profession at this point. However, I do not feel it offers a remotely competitive salary when stacked up against other options. I am aware teaching offers a high starting salary but it doesn't progress particularly well. I have very few school peers earning less than myself on an annual basis.

If we want more teachers in education we (the system) need to rely less on altruism and more on tangible benefits:

better conditions

better teacher support

proper discipline systems where the mass of paper work doesn't need to exceed the mass of the student before things can be done

better pay – I could be wrong but I've been told that in the 70's and 80's a teacher was paid the equivalent wage of a back bencher in parliament. According to Google they are currently on a BASE salary of \$211k.

training in my subject area – I am not aware of any university providing the sort of training an IA teacher requires. Sydney University dismantled its IA training facility some years ago. I am aware that my subject area is expensive to support but who is going to generate interest in the trades if it dies. It will not be STEM, (I know – I teach that as well). All 4 teachers in my faculty will retire within 10 years. I have not seen a practicum IA teacher in more than 7 years.

If NSW and Australia in general, seriously wants to improve the quantity and quality of its teaching workforce, that work force needs to be competitive. To be competitive it needs to offer prospective employees more than they might find in competing industry. In my 25 years' experience as a teacher, I don't see a competitive industry. There is no one in the wings waiting for my job. They are earning far more money and having an easier time doing it in other careers. I work hard at my job because I have a strong sense of professionalism and responsibility to my students, however the current teaching market does not require this of me.

Yours Sincerely

David MacCormick

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I am qualified to teach, physics, chemistry, biology, engineering studies, wood work, metal work, junior mathematics and junior science. I have taught vocational construction and metal work but allowed my qualifications to lapse due to excessive administration required to teach these subjects.