

Submission  
No 186

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
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## Legislative Council

### Portfolio Committee No. 3-Education

#### Submission

There are many issues contributing to teacher shortages in NSW including but not limited to: targeting teachers, merit selection, workload, testing, funding, Local Schools Local Decisions, and Professional and Ethical Standards.

#### Targeting Teachers

The Honourable Robert Stokes MP declared war on teachers when he was the Minister for Education.

Principals were given a target for “Non-Performing” teachers.

This led to falsification and fabrication of performance cases against teachers in order to reach targets.

Many teachers were managed out of the profession, prematurely forced into retirement and eradicated by “support”.

“Support” is a program implemented by principals where a teacher can be disposed of in 5 weeks with the only decision makers being the principal and other senior executive staff at the school.

#### Merit Selection

Since the introduction of “Merit Selection” many staff have been promoted beyond their level of competency.

With central staffing, staff were allocated from the pool of eligible within the Department.

Teachers were inspected by independent inspectors, who were trained by the Department. If deemed competent teachers were Placed on “the list”. A list was compiled for each level AP, HT, DP and Principal and then positions allocated as candidates came to the top of the list.

This ensured staff were experienced, qualified, capable and selected without bias.

Complaints from principals wishing to select their own staff and complaints about how long it took to come to the top of the list led to the adoption of promotion by “Merit Selection”.

The inspection system was abandoned and staff selected by a panel. The panel mostly consists of Principal, Parent/P&C representative, AECG member and one other staff member from school. Candidates decide if they are suitable to apply and often have CV professionally written and embellished. Interview coaching is also heavily invested in.

Mostly CV's are minimally scrutinised.

Merit Selection relies heavily on the previous principal's reference and mostly candidates are not considered if previous principal is not the first referee.

Merit selection has led to nepotism in a previously independent system. It has also led to rapid movement up the promotion ladder by inferior candidates, often with minimal classroom experience.

Combined with quotas merit selection has contributed to less capable teachers.

In the 2000s the Department instigated a policy where the staff at schools should reflect the demographic of the pupils. For example, schools with large Asian or Arabic pupil populations should have mostly teachers from those groups. Consequently, staff were merit selected into those positions. An example is an inner west high school where a head teacher in STEM was appointed at 24 years old in order to fill the demographic quota. This resulted in a teacher with 2 years teaching experience being in charge of a STEM faculty and managing staff rather than a teacher inspected independently with many years of experience. Many of the staff subsequently left.

Parents also do not like the demographic quotas. Parents (of all nationalities) of early primary school children in particular prefer to have their children taught to blend letters and sounds, spell and read by native English speakers rather than teachers whose second (and sometimes even third language) is English. It also affects speech pathology outcomes in the long term.

The staff selection process should be modified to a combination of the previous central staffing and merit selection as there are advantages to both.

Teachers should be inspected by independent inspectors from the Department after a suitable amount of time spent teaching in their subject area, perhaps 5 years, and upon being deemed capable and ready placed upon an eligibility list.

Being on such a list should be a pre-requisite for ability to apply for merit selection.

This allows for some choice of candidate by school/principal and reduces candidates being promoted beyond competency. It also takes some pressure of principals as they are selecting from an already vetted short list negating the need for them to be human resource managers.

### Workload

All school staff are working under unrealistic expectations.

Principals are expected to be business and financial managers and HR consultants (as a result of merit selection).

All business, financial and HR functions should be centralised back to the Department. Perhaps the Department could have “teams” that perform these tasks that are deployed to schools on a rotating basis, that is each team have several schools where they perform functions for 3 weeks and then move on to another school, with the principal being able to request more hours if required.

Staff are expected to undergo an average of 20 hours professional development per year to maintain accreditation.

This does not include mandatory training. They must do first aid, anaphylaxis, child protection, welfare, code of conduct, diversity, aboriginal training, etc...A full list can be obtained from the Department website. Often every year on top of the 20 hours. The Department oversees the

mandatory training and NESA the professional training. Previously was all managed by Department. This had led to a much greater workload as each section increases the training requirements they place on teachers.

Training requirements to maintain accreditation need assessment. They deter casual teachers remaining on books and retiring teachers becoming available as casual teachers as occurred previously. Teachers retiring laugh at becoming casuals as they're done with all that training.

### Testing

Students are being tested excessively for data gathering. This takes time away from younger students learning and consolidating the basics.

Too much emphasis is placed on NAPLAN results and League Tables are only useful for inner city comparisons.

League Tables demoralise students who aren't in the high achieving schools and place undue pressure on schools who are high achieving. Schools are pressured to keep performing and accept more students.

For all regional schools League Tables are useless. Most towns have one or two schools and if more choice is required the choice is move or go to boarding school.

A quality public education should be available no matter where you live in the state.

### Funding

There are always discussions about how more money is now being spent on education.

Unfortunately this is not going into the classroom.

An analysis of education budget into classroom versus total expenditure should be performed.

Educating students should be the primary focus and function of education.

Twenty-five years ago students were more proficient at reading, writing and arithmetic as resources were going into teaching. NAPLAN and ACARA did not exist and were not required.

In some high schools in NSW individual faculty budgets are 10 cents per student per lesson. This figure is at the discretion of the principal who can spend the budget any way they like under Local Schools Local Decisions.

### Local Schools Local Decisions (LSLD)

This policy disadvantages schools and lends itself to abuse.

Principals have inordinate decisions to make here.

Do they let the school infrastructure decline in order to have an extra teacher for better student outcomes? Or a music program? Do they tailor subject choices to the community? I've often heard regional students only need to become farmers thus limiting their prospects.

Since LSLD regional and rural localities are disadvantaged as education is becoming less transferrable. Doctors, nurses, paramedics, bank employees, police, teachers, prison warders, court staff...all now reconsider appointments outside Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong as a 3 to 5 year appointment does not ensure children of these families can relocate back to metropolitan areas without becoming behind in their education.

With so much autonomy being given to principals financial rotting is rife. Nepotism has become normalised.

The “model” for LSLD came from the UK where checks and measures were in place in the form of OFSTED and a Board of Governors for each school. In NSW it was implemented with total autonomy given to principals.

LSLD should be abandoned and Department functions centralised.

#### Professional and Ethical Standards. (PES)

PES replaced EPAC in 2019 even though advice was to establish an independent review process as is in operation in Victoria. It is headed by Mr Daryl Currie.

According to the website ‘the function of PES is to protect the Department’ and ‘issues are to be dealt with at the school level as the Principal knows best what is occurring’.

This ensures dealings with issues are not objective and makes the situation untenable in cases where the Principal is the protagonist or offender.

There are also no repercussions for false allegations made to PES.

Anyone student, parent, teacher, colleague can make an allegation to PES about a Department staff member. The staff member is often not informed at a stage where their case could easily clarify the situation, and the situation escalates. Battered staff members (often teachers) leave the profession even after being determined innocent feeling undervalued and undermined by people they trusted. For example a case at a high school involving an allegation by Principal against a staff member with scant evidence resulted in an investigation of more than a year by PES where the staff member was absent from duty for duration of investigation. Conclusion-nothing to action here. Outcome-The Principal has no repercussions from allegation, staff member leaves the profession.

A whole section of the Department (PES) now dedicated to “disciplining” of teachers. Refer to Department Organisation Chart to see extent.

This is another area that did not exist twenty years ago. The cost should be analysed.

PES should be disbanded and an independent body established as in Victoria.

Spurious actions waste time and money and should be treated similarly to making a false police report.

There is a lot going on in the education space. Further interesting reading can be accessed at the website badapplebullies.