

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 27 July 2022

Partially
Confidential

In teaching, there is a saying 'failing up.' I have taught under many head teachers, deputy principals and principals who have done badly in their jobs and been promoted, either because of nepotism or because the quickest way to get rid of a poor teacher is to give them a great reference and make them someone else's problem.

Insecure leaders are threatened by competent teachers, which is why they often try and sabotage them. I have learnt that, in public education, the code of conduct and disciplinary system is used against teachers. The ten-week teacher improvement plan is not intended to help teachers at all. It is the first step in getting rid of them.

I have observed that the educators that get the awards are not the most deserving, they are the ones who spend the time compiling the most evidence. The truly devoted teachers don't have time to do this.

I have left my position as a permanent English teacher because the job became about classroom management, not teaching. In the last few years, I was sworn at nearly every day by students, both in and out of school hours and by parents. I was not effectively supported by the executive. While pregnant, I was shoulder-charged by a heavy-set Year 8 student. The school I taught at endured lockdowns because of violent students. I now work as a casual in the Catholic system, and I take days at two primary schools. The executive is supportive, and the students are respectful. The local high school is desperate for teachers, but I will not teach there. By the end of my time there, I was mentally and physically very unwell.

I have seen incompetent teachers bully teachers until they quit or go on workers compensation. I know of a principal who had an extra-marital affair with the director who investigated complaints and somehow, she was never found guilty of wrongdoing. At the same school the English head teacher became engaged to his pregnant partner, then had an affair with the prac teacher, left his fiancé at the altar, later married the prac teacher and became her head teacher. That was an awkward staff room!

I have seen virtue-signalling policies put into place. If the higher-ups decide there are too many aboriginal suspensions, then they will simply stop suspending. The behaviour won't change, only now the message is sent that you can behave how you like without major repercussions. For NAIDOC week we are ordered to nominate aboriginal students for awards regardless of whether they are deserving or not. I have had to juggle classes with a number of Individual Learning Plans – Drew is allowed to eat in class because he has ODD, Gina must sit at the front for vision problems, Dana and Tim have autism and Silas is ADHD and needs time outs. Oh, and don't forget that the bottom student reads at a Year 1 level and the top at Year 10, and you are teaching Year 7.

My daughter spent three weeks in NICU when she arrived prematurely, and I spent the week after she was born writing reports in hospital. When my second daughter was put in hospital at sixteen months old with pneumonia, my principal rang the front desk at paediatrics to check that she was really there, and I was not lying. The same principal had a drinking problem and used to send the staff non-sensical, rambling emails late at night.

The schools I have taught at receive enough money but at times it seems to be mismanaged. Why are we buying nicotine patches for the students who smoke? Why were we ordered to build

a new computer room when we desperately needed a music room? Why did the principal need a top-of-the-line coffee machine in her office?

I have neglected my family to work for hours during holidays, after school and weekends doing necessary work and unnecessary, form ticking work. SO much unnecessary data. Organising and supervising discos, fundraisers, excursions, sporting trips, academic trips, end of year assemblies and celebrations.

I bought pads and tampons and kept them in my desk, money for students who don't have lunch, Band-Aids, spare pens, books and glue sticks. I counsel the self-harmers, the bullied, the angry and the hurt. I listened to other struggling teachers and they to me.

And when ministers like Sarah Mitchell and Adrian Picolli tell you that they value every staff member and every student and that their door is always open, I learnt that they lied. I rang, I wrote letters, I participated in school reviews. Only to be told that all is great, there is nothing to see here!

Having to pay NESA for the privilege to teach is ridiculous. The onerous professional learning is time-consuming and just a tick a box exercise. The accreditation process is long and convoluted.

I strongly discourage my children from entering the teaching profession. The workload is huge, the disrespect and job dissatisfaction is crippling. The lack of support and awareness from the higher-ups is more than disappointing – it is demoralising. In my opinion it is not the money, it is the unsupportive executive, the workload, the lack of respect and the lack of support.