

**Submission  
No 196**

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

**Name:** Mrs Rose-Marie Sercombe

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## INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NSW

### Terms of Reference:

**This submission shall be addressing (p) the impact of casualisation, temporary contracts and job insecurity.**

While there are many factors to be considered in this inquiry, we feel that this factor is by far the most critical for teachers when they are choosing whether to remain in the profession. The main issue is permanency.

It appears that **there is no shortage of teachers in primary schools. Rather, there is a shortage of teachers who are willing to work in temporary and casual positions.** There are systemic failures and obstacles in how the Department of Education Staffing Agreement (2021 - 2023) employs permanent, temporary and casual teachers in primary schools.

### The Current Staffing Situation

**Currently one in five teaching positions in NSW is now temporary!** Permanent positions are rare and there are hundreds of applications for permanent positions. It isn't appealing to work casually. Executives treat you like a commodity and believe they will find someone else should they need to. In other professions, working casually is considered to be a privilege and you are valued for your help, but in teaching, you are considered as not worthy of other teaching roles. The teachers leading the union movement are permanent as are the executive staff. There is no voice for the casual or temporary teacher.

### Casual Teachers

For the last 15 or so years, to seek any type of employment in their chosen profession, beginning teachers were often forced to work casually. This effectively means that they were walk-in – walk-out teachers, with no reason to commit to the school community or the better education of students. There is no job security or career path for them. Furthermore, they cannot apply for a mortgage without a permanent job.

### Temporary Teachers

Temporary contracts are no different. They are able to be terminated with 2 weeks notice, despite their sometimes many years of service. And each year they must endure the time-consuming emotional process of re-applying for the same job. They can be disposed of back to the casual pool if the Executive sees fit. These teachers never feel accepted and so it is little wonder that eventually they seek work outside the profession. Their high quality training and qualifications is a loss for the community. Teachers are leaving the profession in significant numbers. The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics suggest **53 per cent of people who hold a teaching degree do not currently work in education.**

These teachers, who cannot get permanency, live from year to year not knowing if they will have a job. They fill positions of teachers who go on leave (sometimes to work at other schools), whose jobs are kept open for years while others fill them temporarily. They are treated as commodities and, as such, they are expendable. They are encouraged to volunteer for whole school activities such as, organising sport and cultural activities including drama and dance, as the permanent teachers often do not feel the need to assist in this capacity. So, in essence, these temporary teachers are contributing to the rich life of the school with little acknowledgement or reward.

## Returning Teachers

If these temporary teachers leave and return to the profession after some time, their industry experience in the workforce (even if it was in the education sector) is not recognised and they begin on Salary Step 1 again. Little wonder that many of these highly qualified teachers are lost to the profession, forever! There is a whole generation of non-permanent teachers. **They are the Forgotten Generation of teachers.**

This has dire consequences for the teaching service. Under the new conditions of employment, beginning teachers, who are target graduates, are now being offered permanency only to be trained and mentored by the previous generation of temporary teachers!

## Case Study

### Male Teacher in Primary School. B Ed.

After graduating could not find employment with the NSW Dept of Education.

2009                    One year contract at Catholic School.

2010 – 2016        Left classroom teaching to become a School Technology Trainer for the DoE Interactive Technologies Contract.

2017                    Casual classroom teacher at local schools

2018 – 2022        Temporary Classroom Teacher, Technology Teacher. Yearly contract.

- On return to classroom teaching, their salary was reset and they were placed on Salary Band 1, equivalent to a graduate teacher.
- This teacher excelled in the technology area and during the COVID period was an invaluable support to their school, yet they were still not offered a permanent position and are considerably behind on the Salary Scale.
- They led and provided ongoing support across the whole school for the multiple online periods across 2020 and 2021. The irony of this situation is that these were the very skills which were not recognised by the salary determination.
- As a result they earn significantly less (\$30,000 per year!) than a similarly qualified teacher who has not left the profession.
- They are only now being contacted to apply for permanent positions based on their 2008 preferences! Unfortunately they have now moved on in their private lives, married with children and established in a community, so they are unable and unwilling to uproot and go anywhere in the State, as they would have done as a beginning teacher.

### Observation:

If there is a shortage of teachers, and especially male teachers in primary schools, why couldn't this teacher secure a permanent position anywhere in the state?

### Recommendations

1 Increase the number of permanent positions in schools, to provide security and incentive to those eligible teachers, so that highly qualified professionals will apply and become valued members of their school community. Some primary schools advertise for 4-10 temporary positions at the end of every year. Surely that means the numbers warrant some permanent positions?

2 Target the non-permanent teachers of 5 years and more and offer them positions in their current school ahead of beginning teachers.

3 Identify which schools have teacher shortages, advertise them, seek expressions of interest and offer a one year contract to the successful applicant.

4 After one year, if the teacher is competent, offer them permanency. That way the school will secure a teacher who is suited to the community and a teacher who is willing to commit to serving that community.

5 Close the loopholes which allow teachers to manipulate the leave system so that they can take extended periods of leave without pay and still retain permanency. Reduce the right of return time for which a permanent position can be held.

6 Be creative with returning teachers. Recognise their experience, especially if it is relevant to education and offer them salaries commensurate with their qualifications and experience.

7 Provide pathways for current teachers to transition to other KLAs e.g. primary teaching to TAS teaching, Secondary English to teacher Librarian.

8 When teachers strike they are seeking, among other things, more relief from face to face teaching, to be able to complete administrative tasks. Instead of taking teachers off class to do this, employ more administrative staff for specific Stages or Faculties, not more teachers! Teachers need to teach! One teacher per primary class provides ideal learning conditions for students, not a shared teaching load.

9 We still need casuals, so make casual work more attractive. Often casuals are mistreated by the executive and they have no recourse to just working conditions.

### **Contact Details**

Mrs Rose-Marie Sercombe – retired Secondary English / History teacher of 31 years in the Dept of Education.

I was extremely fortunate to find career satisfaction (Advanced Skills Teacher, Placement on Secondary Promotions List 2, Presiding Officer for HSC exams) and therefore, made a lifetime commitment to teaching.

Andrew Sercombe (Temporary Teacher - Primary)