

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 29 July 2022

Partially
Confidential

To: Parliamentary Inquiry to Teacher Shortages in New South Wales

To the Inquiry,

My name is _____ and I am a secondary teacher in the public school system. I have been teaching for seven years. In the last four years, I have volunteered my time as one of the few moderators on NSW's biggest Facebook group for casual teachers, the NSW Casual Teachers page. This page was developed by a colleague with the aim of creating a collaborative, online space for casual teachers to seek work, ask for advice and support, and to encourage each other where possible. The group currently boasts 22,500 members.

This letter of submission to the inquiry relates to my experience as a moderator for this community group.

It is common knowledge that today's teacher shortage was far from an unprecedented phenomenon that simply occurred overnight. The contributing factors of the situation require careful consideration and immediate action. As a moderator within the Facebook group, I'm privy to the trends of casual and temporary teachers across the state.

Just this year alone, there has been a sharp increase in questions relating to the job. Or more specifically, how to leave it.

The most alarming trend I have seen this year has been teachers on temporary contracts with schools enquiring how to leave and asking for suggestions on alternative careers. Tellingly, these posts always attract numerous responses. The most common complaint is that the workload is unsustainable. It is not an uncommon situation for teachers to come to school early (around 7am) to prepare lesson plans for the day. This is if they don't have any meetings to attend that may take this valuable time. Then there is the job of teaching students with diverse and complex needs (for which there is inadequate time to receive sufficient training) followed by administrative tasks to ensure those needs are documented. After school ends, there are phone

calls to parents or meetings to attend. Then often, it's marking and feedback to students from the work of the day.

Most teachers have reported that they do not end up leaving the school grounds until well after 5pm. How can we expect teachers to cope with all the weight of administration tasks, especially new and casual teachers? No wonder we are losing so many teachers. More than 50,000 teachers are expected to leave the profession between 2020 and 2025. The workloads are simply unsustainable and the pay has simply not matched the workload for a long time.

For a primary school teacher, marking and feedback might be for 30 students. Per lesson, of which there may be 3-6 a day. For secondary teachers, that could be well over 200 students, with more complex marking and feedback for HSC students. Marking on top of NCCD evidence, adjustment plans, moderated work and professional learning. Most students do not benefit from this; quite the opposite as teachers are worn out by 9am. The government needs to stop believing that teaching is simply a 9-3 job where you stand in front of a class, teach and then leave as soon as the bell goes. Teaching has become so complex and intricate and so many things need to be taken into consideration before a teacher even steps into the classroom.

During school hours, aside from teaching, recess and lunch times are spent on playground duties and providing co-curricular opportunities for our students. Sports training usually occurs before or after school. Many teachers barely have time to offer extra curricular activities during and outside of school due to the existing multitude of other obligations. Many teachers have reported that they do not have time to chair extra curricular activities like debating, sport groups, art clubs or community activities. This is in turn depriving students of necessary skills and a much-needed outlet for their creative or competitive energies.

In addition to the tasks above, there are the endless demands for professional development, accreditation, compliance training, keeping up to date with the department's many new policies, data collection and analysis, and trying to adopt the role of psychologist when dealing with a rapidly growing number of students with anxiety and other mental health issues. There are copious numbers of assessments to develop, implement and evaluate. To top it all off, throw in curriculum and resource development and reporting to parents. All of these demands are expected to be completed in our own time, outside of school hours. The primary teacher

entitlement of 2 hours of RFF a week is just enough time to mark one class' writing lesson and photocopy work ready for the next lesson.

Most teachers report working late into the evening, on weekends and during the 'holidays', taking valuable time away from responsibilities at home and spending time with their own families and children.

Another consistent trend is the use of temporary contracts at schools to secure employment. It is common knowledge that teachers can be embedded at a school and invested in their community for years while being on a temporary contract. Each year around Term 4 we see a spike in anxious posts from teachers who love their schools wondering if they'll have a job the following year. The lack of permanent positions made available due to complex arrangements around long service leave, sick leave or leave without pay undoubtedly contributes to teachers opting to leave when their hard work cannot be rewarded with job security. Retraining is not straightforward, often costly, and not necessarily a surefire way to secure a permanent position. Therefore, leading to long term temporary contracted teachers leaving the sector.

It should also be noted that for many teachers, schools are becoming increasingly dangerous. Children and teenagers often challenge authority; this is a normal process of growing up. But several teachers have been subject to physical assault or online slander from their students. Such behavior is undoubtedly tragic, but when teachers are weighing up continued employment as a teacher or risk harm, one cannot expect teachers to consistently choose the former when the later is a very real possibility.

The last, and the most concerning trend I have seen, is the high turnover of casual teachers who are leaving the profession after only just graduating. Complex arrangements between two different education bodies, the Department of Education and NESAs, often stymie teachers from being able to simply graduate and begin teaching. Lack of structured support for casual teachers also contributes to teachers wanting to leave. Some schools offer fantastic support to casual teachers with regular bookings and assistance with classroom management. Other schools, however, treat casual teachers as a means to simply have a trained and accredited teacher in a classroom with little to no formal support.

The current teacher shortage in NSW is exponentially increasing each day. There are literally hundreds of posts on our page from disheartened, overworked and undervalued teachers who have simply had enough of having to choose between continuing to follow their passion for teaching and being able to care for their own mental health and their families.

Casual teachers play a vital role in the operations of a school. The nature of a casual teacher is to be able to pick up any lesson, any class, and teach it to the best of their knowledge. The inquiry needs to strongly consider if, and how, casual teachers can be supported to continue to contribute and teach at their local schools.

We acknowledge the efforts made by the NSW government to attract new teachers to the profession. Unfortunately, these are unlikely to be successful until the government takes swift and considerable action to address the myriad of challenges that are currently being faced by existing teachers.

Thank you for reading my submission to the inquiry.

Regards,

on behalf of 22,500 NSW casual school teachers