

**Submission
No 202**

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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I was recruited by the NSW Education Department in England in 1971. I possessed a Bachelor of Education Degree (Education and Physical Education) from the University of Birmingham (UK). My four years of training for me was free of fees, and I received free accommodation, food and a small living allowance. I taught for two years at Brierley Hill Grammar School.

I qualified for migration to Australia as a "Ten-pound Pom". I became quickly aware that I was a very cheap teacher for NSW as the cost to the Government was a single economy airfare and a week's accommodation in Sydney while I settled in. There was a shortage of teachers in NSW in 1971, but in the back of my mind I was unsettled that I was taking a job from a NSW student. I still maintain my belief that NSW is best served by locally trained teachers.

I am now a retired NSW High School Principal. I served as Deputy Principal at Courallie High School in Moree between 1987 and 1991, and as Principal at Gunnedah High School between 1991 and 2006. In these twenty years I encountered periods at both schools when there were serious teacher shortages, and getting teachers in front of a class was a great challenge.

I will not dwell on details of the current staffing crisis in NSW schools but offer these suggestions to relieve some of the difficulties in rural areas.

1. A reintroduction and expansion of teacher scholarships tied to a period of service in schools that are hard to staff is needed.
2. The establishment of two universities in rural towns in NSW (one in the north and one in the south) specifically to cater for students from rural areas who are prepared to return to hard to staff areas at the completion of their course should be a priority. These universities should be fully funded by the Government, fee free and with associated comfortable accommodation. The current prospect of university education for a student in rural NSW can be very daunting. Invariably it means living away from home (and support) in a large town, often in meagre accommodation, having to spend more time in a part time job to make ends meet than on study, with potentially a large HECS debt at the end. These universities would also assist with the supply of doctors and other professionals also in short supply in rural areas.
3. The strengthening of the transfer and point system so teachers have the lifeline of returning to more sought-after areas after a period of rural service is needed. My experience at Courallie High School showed that young teachers would accept a rural position if they had the option to return to the coast after a few years. Associated with this, a leave provision for teachers in isolated areas to be able to visit other schools and teachers in larger centres for their professional development would be a great benefit.
4. A dramatic increase in teacher salaries and improvement of working conditions is required. A well-organised teacher needs time to plan and prepare lessons but does not need to be overburdened by bureaucratic requests for unnecessary and timewasting paperwork.
5. Greater incentives and rewards for teachers in rural areas is also a priority. Housing and transport subsidies are especially required.

In my time in rural NSW I have become increasingly frustrated with the Sydney centric mentality of the State Government. Regional NSW is often confused with Rural NSW. Each has different issues. Residents in rural areas pay their GST and should be entitled to their share in the NSW funding cake.

Thank you for reading this submission. I hope that the committee members of this Inquiry are brave enough to leave their Macquarie Street desks and travel over the mountains to visit some rural areas and see the issues.

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