

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

The teacher shortage has a number of contributing factors but I would like to focus on just three. Hopefully this makes my submission more succinct and easier to follow. I was very reluctant to make this submission as I feel that the NSW Public Education system is pretty close to a lost cause, but I'll try one last time.

My story is a cautionary tale for any male teachers looking to come to NSW and teach or any males considering taking up this profession. After coming across to the NSW system with experience from Kindergarten to Year 12 and across four different states I was bullied out of my career. At the time it was very difficult to attain a permanent position, but due to my experience and capabilities as a teacher I was able to secure a permanent Assistant Principal position within six months. And this was when the bullying began. One of my colleagues was so jealous of me that she was actively campaigning against me at school and in our small regional community. According to her and her 'mob' of colleagues I only got the position "because he had a cock" (substantiated incident – multiple occasions), and being the only male teacher on our staff I endured five years of this type of behaviour until it finally broke me. So here is what I can tell you about teaching in NSW:

1 – Many NSW Government Primary Schools, particularly regional, are rampant with bullying, jealousy, poor conduct and nepotism. If you're male it gets even worse. Male teachers are usually going to find themselves the only or one of a pair of men in the school. Whether we like it or not young students will often find themselves drawn to the different approach male teachers often have, particularly boys with challenging behaviours. It will also be likely that male teachers are more sporty or active and therefore bring more energy to teaching and again students are drawn to this, again, particularly boys with challenging behaviours. Considering the male teacher will be likely the only man, they will be popular with students and parents/carers across the school as their presence is more prominent. So, without doubt male teachers soon find themselves targets of 'matron-like' female teachers, who become jealous. They will spread false rumours about your performance; they will deliberately ostracize you from staff events; in my case the Assistant Principal will direct the staff she supervises to cease friendship with you (a substantiated incident) and other staff members who have a friendship with you (also substantiated). This behaviour will increase until you either quit or become sick. At which point you will leave the profession.

*As well as male teachers this type of behaviour will also be directed at enthusiastic new teachers who bring new skills, knowledge and attitudes to the profession. This is a huge contributor to the attrition rate of beginning teachers, not just males.

2- But you'll get support if you report this type of conduct, right? There are policies and procedures that protect employees from this type of behaviour surely? Well on paper there are but if you blow the whistle on this rampant culture, you'll be treated like every other whistle blower. Firstly, it is more than likely that your principal is a 'yes' man or woman and will be embarrassed at their own incompetence in failing to address the school culture. They won their promotion not because they were the best person for the job, but because they always comply with new directives and the endless new initiatives handed down the line from directors and executive directors. Managing the school culture was always going to be beyond their skillset. So, they will blame you or blame share – clash of personalities, personal differences, etc, etc, etc. And then the director or executive director is always on the principal's side – that's how their position is designed. So, they will go straight into a Public Relations position to protect the

reputation of the school and the department. The reality is quite apparent – if you have been the victim of sexist bullying and discrimination you are now a liability. Expect now to be targeted. In my case, when I reported the conduct of the Assistant Principal, 16 of 24 incidents were substantiated as well as a disturbing following incident, but it was not bullying. 16 incidents were substantiated but this was not bullying this was “multiple incidents of inappropriate behaviour”. Weeks later the Assistant Principal was seconded to a new position in Sydney (promoted for the above mentioned) and there was a promise from the Executive Director that the school culture would be addressed (it wasn't). So, if you're a teacher expecting a safe and supportive workplace, forget it. Perform well, or even worse, out perform your colleagues, and expect retaliation.

**Executive Directors were once Directors who were once Principals who, as pointed out above, did not necessarily win their first executive position as a result of their competence. Many are selected for their long-proven track record to follow directions – compliance - even when the direction is a poor one. The end result is educational leadership that has been a compounding of incompetence.

3 – The incompetence at an executive level within the NSWDOE is alarming. In my case not only did they fail to address the school culture but they allowed the bullying to continue. To the point where my matter ended up at NCAT for sexual discrimination where instead of trying to solve the sexism they just tried to pay me off. Then instead of investigating my complaints against the principal and director using their official policy they waited till I could be medically retired and the ‘official’ complaints ended there. Suspiciously, in their defence of the NSWDOE at the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board, the lawyers acting for the Department argued that the Assistant Principal, Principal and Director were all moved from their positions as a result of my complaints. So, what can only be described as ‘cloak and dagger’ conduct the complaints were handled secretly so as to hide the conduct and protect the reputation of the school. But the flow on effect is immense. The school lost 47 enrolments (15% of total enrolments) after I stopped working (data collected from ‘MySchool’ 2021) and the teacher turnover has been enormous. When high performing teachers are treated the way I have been treated, other teachers (the bystanders and witnesses) take note. They get scared, they lose motivation, and they start planning an avenue out of the profession. Again, here is another explanation for dwindling teacher numbers. My story is not an anomaly, I can assure you. There are hundreds of similar stories to mine across the state. There is even a support group for teachers who have experienced this. There has even been a book written about this treatment. Do the maths – 1 teacher bullied = 5,10 + scared teacher witnesses/bystanders = (they tell 3,4,5 friends/colleagues) 15-50 people with negative stories about teaching as a profession. This formula continues on exponentially.

*** It is important to note that the abysmal way in which my case was handled was overseen by a principal, director and executive director. More specifically, three directors and three executive directors have been involved in my matter. This case has also been brought to the attention of the Secretary and the Minister. So, judging ‘Executive’ performance from my case, one must then make comparisons to the many initiatives and directives sent out to schools from these ‘Educational Leaders’. These initiatives which are the main contributor to teacher workload, have been designed with the same level of competence. And the results are clear – student results continuing to drop and drop and drop; teacher turnover and teacher shortages at crisis point; never lower teacher morale and dissatisfaction. Despite this the spotlight is always cast onto teachers and their performance – but they are simply following the directions and adhering to systems designed by increasingly incompetent principals, directors and executive directors.

The sad reality is 'Leadership' for the NSWDOE is about compliance. Compliance with directives, initiatives and systems from incompetent leaders who don't have the knowledge nor understanding of what a modern classroom and a modern student is like. And we are not at rock bottom yet. Not even close. When the only people you can recruit to your system are compliant, robot-like workers, imagine what classrooms and schools will look like then. Good luck.