

Submission
No 215

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mrs Kerryanne Knox

Date Received: 30 July 2022

The submission is lodged on behalf of the Association of Retired Primary Principals. (ARPP)

There has been a growing concern over a number of years about the manner in which the Department has built its teacher workforce. The amount of administration to hire teachers has been overwhelming and the complete lack of advice from educators about the need to manage university graduates in quicker processes to avoid the leakage to independent schools.

Most of the members of this Association were recipients of scholarships where we accepted the position to any school across NSW so that our three to four years of tuition could be paid. As a result, there was a loyal group of teachers who demonstrated their respect by remaining in the system for long periods of time.

As a group, we are disappointed that public schools are not being staffed properly and that the students in these schools are further disadvantaged.

We have concentrated on the following areas to demonstrate why we believe that there is a teacher shortage in NSW. Apart from a lack of foresight and planning, the government needs to act immediately.

- Workload of administration that is detracting teachers from teaching and learning.
The amount of paperwork that teachers need to complete, usually outside their teaching time, is overwhelming. The two hours release that they receive to plan lessons and talk to other teachers and counsellors has been eaten away with the completion of paperwork. Every school has different administration tasks and some schools tracking is over the top.
- Teaching to tests for the first half of the year with unrealistic expectations on teachers and students
With the stress of each school meeting improved results every year in NAPLAN, there is pressure on teachers to deliver the results. As every class is different and the cohort of children can vary greatly from year to year, the constant pressure of the students improving every year leads teachers to “teach to the test” and spend copious amounts of time on test examples. Understanding a broader view of improvement over a number of years no longer exists.....everything must be done in a hurry to demonstrate a teacher is doing the job properly.
- No joy in the art of teaching – K-2 Syllabus is so prescribed that there is no room for ANY creativity by the teacher.
The joy in teaching has disappeared. We can only see teachers teaching to a syllabus and rushing through topics rather than allowing students to explore and develop ideas. Teachers were able to allow their students to experience so many ideas in a topic by providing so many activities that stretched their imagination. The old adage that we are constantly “weighing the pig” rather than “feeding the pig” is apt.
- Unnecessary mandatory training
The amount of training that teachers now have to do increases every year. Every department has a powerpoint or small clip with so many questions that teaches , at the beginning of the year, are madly trying to complete the mandatory training even before they start to think about their classes and their individual programs.
- Non-competitive salaries in industry as a whole
Salaries are not in keeping with other industries and we are losing competent teachers to private industry. Considering the skills that teachers possess, private industry loves to welcome a teacher to their business and they pay accordingly.
- Devaluing of the profession by bureaucrats and politicians

Teachers face so many issues in schools that no other profession has to deal with on a daily basis.

- Abusive parents who are critical of the manner in which their child has been treated before they even try to understand what happened.
- Students who do not react well to school systems
- Students whose parents allow them to be disrespectful without any consequence.
- Parents who turn their phones off or do not answer a call from the school because they know that their child has done something that needs a parent at the school
- Abusive emails and phone calls from parents.
- Poor quality technology
- The failure of the Minister and the Secretary to defend teachers for any reason (cf to Police Minister and Fire Commissioner who defend their people when required)
One of the positive experiences that we, as a group of educators were provided with in the past, was a Director-General (Secretary) and a Deputy Director-General (Deputy Secretary) who faced the media and the public when the teaching profession required some support. This is non-existent ...teachers in schools feel alone on many occasions without any inspirational leaders at the top.
- Whittling away of the authority of schools
Local Schools Local Decisions reform turned this around for schools and it would have worked if the Government had committed to the funds that they originally pledged to train Principals, executive and administration staff in the new operational approach. As a result, the department is slowly taking every decision back from schools.
- Failure to develop and implement well-being strategies (for Yrs 7-12 the strategies suggested DO NOT align with the Crimes Act)
- Increased hostility by parents and students to staff
Teachers should not have to deal with hostility of parents.
- The failure of the DET to provide systems that are “fit for purpose”
The failure of a number of systems over the last 10 years has placed stress and frustration in schools. Teachers learning new systems to “save time” have resulted in more time because of the poor quality of the system.
- Directorates that DO NOT talk to each other resulting in time lags to solve or deal with issues.
Teachers are constantly observing Principal frustration in trying to solve issues where there has been incorrect information provided from directorates OR conflicting information given. Teachers have viewed the next step of executive or Principal as too hard and very stressful.so there is no career path which has resulted in teachers leaving the system.
- Increased pressure on CRT to deliver system negotiated targets.
The Department has moved to system negotiated targets and despite the constant information that “teachers know their students best” this idea is not aligned. With Covid over the past few years, there is no negotiation at the school level as to how these targets will change.
- Pathetic scholarship incentives that have not been updated in the last 15 years.
There are not creative plans as to how teacher shortages will be addressed. The scholarship incentives are outdated and insulting to young people just starting their career.
- Inordinate amounts of money spent on university grads who are poached before they leave Uni...our system is too slow.
The number of university graduates who are poached by independent schools is becoming outrageous. The enticement of salary, resources and permanency has taken our best teachers from the system before they even start. By the time a graduate is offered a position they have already accepted another job.

- Inability of school executive to build capacity.
School executive have a workload that is overwhelming. Each school tries to provide additional time for executive so that they can cope with the administration tasks, behaviour management of students and professional learning of staff. Building capacity is ad hoc and can lead to dissatisfaction of teachers. Without experience and capacity building, teachers are being promoted and facing even more stress because of their lack of knowledge.
- Inability of the DET to manage in a timely manner dysfunctional staff in schools that cause collateral damage on all staff – WH &S, conduct issues.
The processes involved in this area have improved with the implementation of local programs of support. The amount of administration that is required to place teachers on an improvement program is overwhelming. Executive and Principals take on this process as an additional to the administration required at the school.

The funding issues with public schools will always make them less attractive when it comes to teachers selecting the system for a career. The teachers who choose public education know that they are making a difference to a range of students from varying cultural backgrounds and socio-economic communities. We need to reward them by offering permanency and rethinking the scholarship process.

It is time to start thinking out of the box about what is happening in schools and how much of the paperwork do we actually require to ensure that each child is receiving a positive education.

Time to ensure that all of the quantitative data that we have focussed on for years is matched with qualitative data. How many schools have time to look back at that little 5 year old who could not sit still and had no social skills and no experience from home in literacy and numeracy compared to the same child at 12 years of age, who has literacy and numeracy skills ready for secondary school and is a happy, healthy child with a range of interests.

We would have a better workforce if we looked at how we can get teachers into our schools with easier, quicker processes, offered them permanency and created a work environment where they felt valued and appreciated by all.

We experienced that feeling and we stayed for forty years plus in a system that each and every one of us was proud of.