

Submission
No 233

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Our students are suffering the consequences of teacher shortages at my school where I am the Principal. We have had unfilled vacancies all year and no capacity to release staff for training or excursions because we also have no casual staff. To ensure that students are supervised, our staff have been combining classes and changing arrangements to minimal supervision and covering vacancies and for staff in sick leave, by teaching extras in their scheduled non-teaching preparation time. Our class sizes are larger, even for our most disadvantaged students and our capacity to address equity gaps has been significantly reduced as a result. We do not have the staff to offer transition and flexible learning programs for students at risk of leaving school early or struggling with significant barriers, including homelessness, mental health and disability. We've had staff on sick leave from Covid and flu throughout the year and the stress they face when having to use sick leave includes the knowledge that their students will not be able in many situations in practical classes, to access the syllabus.

We must recruit more staff. We need smaller classes so that our complex students get the intensive help they need. We must support our teachers with more preparation time to effectively plan for complex students and multiple syllabus demands. We must make teaching an attractive career option and that starts with salary and working conditions.

We must simplify the process for interstate teachers to gain approval to teach. My school is close to the Victorian border but there are too many obstacles for successful recruitment. As a young teacher I worked in the UK as a teacher. It was made accessible by a process to cut red tape. I have run 15 panels trying to get staff just this year which takes a massive amount of time. Overseas teachers are applying but they have no idea of what our selection processes are - a missed opportunity.