

**Submission
No 240**

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr Ross Montague

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Thank you in advance for taking the time to read my submission.

I am a proud NSW public school teacher. My wife is a teacher, my parents were both teachers and my in-laws were teachers as well. Teaching has been a passion for my family for a very long time and I'm very well placed to give my valued opinion on where the profession is headed in NSW. Unfortunately, there has been a noticeable decline in NSW schools over the past few years.

Since my teaching career began in 2006, I've had the opportunity to use my teaching qualifications to work in the USA, UK and Australia, where for the past 13 years I have taught in South Western Sydney high schools. During that time, I have worked extremely hard with colleagues, students and the broader school community to achieve my Highly Accomplished Teaching Accreditation (HALT). Currently, there are less than 1000 HALT's across the whole of Australia.

According to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), being a certified HALT in a school improves student learning outcomes, contributes to an increased culture of learning amongst staff and enables quality teaching to impact across the school. Indeed, I do these things regularly as part of my professional practice as an educator, but it's becoming extremely difficult to do so as each week goes by.

Unfortunately, there has a declining number of colleagues within the school setting to plan, create and teach innovative and engaging lessons to students, as teaching numbers are at a drastically low level. This has been highly evident over the previous couple of years, where collapsed classes and no casual teachers have become the norm, long before the pandemic.

There are a number of reasons why both experienced and new scheme teachers are leaving the profession in droves. Teachers are regularly swept up in endless amounts of administration, meetings and compliance/box ticking measures, instead of doing what they love – teaching students. We have reduced preparation time to create meaningful, exciting and relevant lessons, which is having a negative and long-lasting impact on the educational outcomes of young people in schools. We do our best to get through an overcrowded syllabus, often work in old, dilapidated buildings and experience abuse and intimidation from parents/carers. The working conditions have really deteriorated over the last couple of years. I have not even mentioned the pay that teachers are currently fighting to improve.

How is the department meant to attract the 'brightest and best' people to become teachers if they are not willing to pay them what their worth. The 'More than Thanks' campaign run by the NSW Teachers Federation has highlighted this point multiple times. If the department wants to invest in glossy advertisement campaigns, trying to recruit teachers over investing in new and current teachers, sadly, our children will be the ones that suffer.

It will take investment. It will involve compromise, but our children are worth it. I still love my job, but the flame is slowly flickering out. I don't want to let my students down.

Ross Montague
Highly Accomplished Teacher (HALT – NSW)