

Supplementary
Submission
No 246a

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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A submission to the NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No .3 - Education

Inquiry into teacher shortages in New South Wales

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A Supplementary Submission 31 August 2022 to go with initial from 31 July 2022

This submission addresses the following terms of reference and follows my primary submission addressing the points of reference:

- (a) current teacher shortages in NSW schools;
- (b) future teacher supply and demand;
- (e) teaching workforce conditions;
- (p) the impact of casualisation, temporary contracts and job insecurity;
- (r) any other related matter – being many others highlighted in my first submission.

Introduction:

The vast majority of submissions so far to this inquiry and news bytes from the 12th August national summit of Educational Leaders focused on increasing supply. Many teachers felt alienated even further by the “talk” which was seen by many as talking about them, down to them and around them – anything but talking with them.

1. Stretching the elasticity: Focusing mainly on supply

There is only a certain percentage of the adult population who would have the skills or the wish to do the occupation of teaching. Many people would lack the temperament and patience; the ability to be able to explain or some would lack the confidence to do it.

That percentage of people would never do it – even if you allowed them to qualify in six months or 6 hours! In turn they would not do it – no matter what the monetary incentives – 40% extra or even more.

Eventually schemes to boost the supply will be exhausted, thus the critical point is **to undertake qualitative research on the reasons people have actually quit** – not just from samples of people who say they plan to quit in the next five years.

The continued efforts to “mine” into the upper limits of “supply” at the ignorance of real issues facing teachers continue to reinforce to them they are replaceable.

However, every few days another scheme is being announced off the back of an envelope “pink batts style” and continues to reinforce the image of chaos, panic and systemic problems – and it also drives away even more people who might have contemplated it. The HSC students of 2022 are making decisions now what they will study in 2023.

My warning would be if you stuff up the next batch of people by not fixing other critical issues which appear to have had little coverage then **within 2 years the system will collapse**.

2. The failure to listen to the two strikes in the past year

At the end of 2021 and early 2022 the Teachers went on strike over the shortages of staff which were making their jobs more stressful and difficult. They also claim that they were entitled to a much higher pay rise than the NSW Government was offering.

Remember when Covid-19 Lockdowns were ending – getting schools back working was the only way to re-start the economy? How soon the pivotal role they play was forgotten.

The pay claims were agitated for long before inflation spiked to a forecast @ 8%; their rents or interest rates on their mortgages started to rise; and now there is discussion to stop the legislated tax cuts. Teachers starting 2023 could be @ 10% and more behind in real terms than when they started 2022. This is when so many of them are already doing extra duties.

The financial situation will be further blown out if an average @ \$50k HECS debt for an early career teacher rises by 8%. This would be @ \$4k taken off \$59k after tax on \$73k early career teacher's wage (Provisional) meaning a 5.5% off pre-taxable income, 6.78% after tax.

We have a shortage of staff in a “profession” seen as pivotal to the whole economy and submissions and summits advertise as an opportunity to solve the problem. However, in this financial year alone that wage should be set to \$86k delivering @ \$67.6k after tax – JUST to keep the real spending value and to accommodate the rise in their HECS debt/ repayments.

A rise of 17.8% is needed. Disregarding HECS, \$80,500 or a rise of @10.28% would be just.

The prices, goods and services they are paying will not fall back down. There is merely a prediction of much lower rises in future years.

They did not listen much about the conditions side of the “Pay and Conditions” catchphrase – namely the lack of security moving forward in regards to mortgages and buying a house. There was no discussion about increasing the number of permanent positions.

3. The Motives for teaching besides pay

Money is however, not the only factor for many teachers. Some of the best teachers effectively volunteer. They have their house paid off and often own investment properties. Many of them would do it for half the pay – their motive is a day out, feeling useful and often it is helping their own community.

The schemes being talked about tend to be almost all about money. Many of the retired teachers who would be willing to work a few days a week are restricted or lack the will because of many of the conditions I raised in my initial submission.

All these schemes that talk about money all the time, especially the ones in the past 2 months have insulted this group of potential returning teachers. They left because of so many of the conditions. It is not just too many hours, too much paper work, but Bullying.

4. Power games by more senior staff

Any former teacher or professionals thinking about a change to teaching would be very reluctant do so hearing stories about bullying by staff; petty jealousies which flare against people who have achieved outside; lack of critical support for teachers whether younger or mature age; a disciplinary system with examples of its brutality are shown by the way it treated teachers over the Vaccine mandate – some with more than three decades service.

a) A Third Super Class of Department of Education staff: Principal and Director

However, the hierarchal system is assured where a Principal and Director do not seem to be accountable and staff and parents cannot report them. This creates a third *super* class. We have Temporary Contract staff with no right to a legal hearing and Casuals with a slim chance – but they have to endure months or a year or more of the Department of Education challenging this right. Half of their work force are denied a judicial review.

However, we have a Principal and Director *class* who it appears by the refusal by disciplinary staff to answer several emails that they cannot even be reported.

For example, I first lodged a claim in the Industrial Relations Commission in mid-November 2021, and after two delays, then a hearing about whether I get a hearing it is now 16 weeks and 5 days today with a reserved decision still pending.

With letters to Ministers, all the legal paper work, submissions to this hearing hoping to draw attention to issues, I realised I would have easily completed three times the paper work and hours that it took to get the Teaching qualification. This is for something I was denied a first initial hearing and a process designed to completely disadvantage and oppress right from the start – with numerous principles of law and justice denied at almost every stage.

b) Temporary and Casual

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 17 August 2022, “Number of temporary teachers in NSW schools almost doubles in a decade” Ms Sarah Mitchell said:

Temporary positions are not necessarily a bad thing. School principals often use their autonomy when it comes to using record flexible funding by engaging temporary staff to support the delivery of specific programs or to support specific students.

The Temporary positions might be good for schools – but they are not good for teachers and many also question the frequent changing of the roster in a school as good for the students?

It is not just the lack of security but it's the lack of actual rights assigned to the position.

I understand Ms Mitchell is primarily about “supply”. If we can get even more people to do it, then there will not be a problem – is severely limited to two dimensional vision. It appears the NSW Government and Department believe that there is an unlimited supply they can tap before they will address the real issues that are set up against these people and how in practice they are and can be treated. More supply is more power to continue ill treatment until their supply dwindles again.

I recall in 2015 when there was an abundant supply of Casuals. I did three days of Casual and none again until 2018. My last day I did was my first at a Third Local High School. Many months later I received a call at 6am. I had even forgotten I was down on any lists. However, I did have my car booked for service that day and being ethical I told the lady.

She turned very nasty and yelled down the phone “Okay this is the second time I have rung. You have said ‘No’. I won't be ringing again.”

She was telling the truth. It was the second time she had rung me. The first time I had aid yes and worked, and the many months went by. I had blown my chance!

I said to my wife at the time. “Who wants to be treated like this?”

I then recalled at this time, on that one day I was there I remember sitting at a desk eating my lunch and I heard a lady say “Imagine being a Casual. A different school every day. No friends. Nobody to sit with.”

Efforts by the Ministers of Education on 12 August to boost supply will be futile with the kind of stupidity I recalled at this third high school. I did not try to “come back” for 3 more years.

c) The Permanent dilemma

Permanent staff do not escape easy either. If they are in a school where they have decided it's not working well for them and their own development as a teacher or at its extremes where they see it is as totally toxic, it is not an easy escape.

The staff member puts in their transfer and has to wait for the Principal to approve it. They also have to hope they are then selected by a school in the nominated areas.

In reciprocal of this though, the Principal has the power to nominate to transfer a staff member as late as the very last day of the school year.

I do not know how staff would plan signing new leases or taking out mortgages.

5. Even More Schemes: More Aggravation to existing Teachers

Since my main submission on 31 July cited five schemes since 17 July 2022. No discussion to fix critical organisational structures happened. Instead, there were more ways to make the situation even worse.

The teachers themselves that I have spoken to felt Talked at, about and around – but not to.

The proposals since then have included:

a) “Minister backs push for career-change teachers” *The Australian* 2 August 2022
“Plans to plug the teacher shortage by **fast-tracking engineers, lawyers and IT professionals into high school classrooms** have been endorsed by Jason Clare.”

b) “Radical fix for teacher shortage: 40pc pay rise” *The Australian* 2 August 2022
“Lawyers, engineers and IT experts would be parachuted into classrooms to address crippling shortages under reforms that include **pay rises for the best teachers.**”

Both proposals a and b – getting Lawyers and the extra 40% pay were met with anger. Many thought that teachers who had plodded away for twenty years or more would not appreciate finding these people suddenly appear at a much higher pay level. Bringing in these professional people and exposing them to the hierarchal systems and petty jealousies without fixing them first will be a further waste of potential resources.

The idea that these people would qualify in six months when existing teachers spent five years or at least a two year add-on qualification reinforced the idea the existing teachers are seen as somehow having a lower intellectual capacity.

Furthermore these professionals already have a “backup” profession – so just as it might be easy for them to cross over into teaching – it will be just as easy to leave it.

In regards to “top performing” – how will they quantify it? In testing Literacy and Numeracy this might be easy to measure, but measuring somebody's ability to learn for life or changed behavioural outcomes are much harder to put on any scale. What is the value of a much better behaved citizen? The results might actually appear several years later - long after the student being at school. Settling some students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and getting them to do “some learning” and showing them how to learn itself is an achievement. It is a much more difficult and challenging role.

Many teachers suspect the “top performers” will be in rich areas, also those within a school clique. The scheme an invitation for additional pay to be given to favourites.

The cost of implementing the measurement of this program itself will entail all kinds of additional Departmental staff and money – that could be spent on teachers and resources. It would also likely include large amounts of additional paper work for all.

c, d and e) Pump up the Supply

By the middle of the month the determination to pump up the supply was heating up:

“Would-be teachers to earn while they learn under scheme to tackle shortage”
Sydney Morning Herald 12 August 2022 was followed by
“Paid internships for uni students to work in schools will be part of radical reforms to teacher training, as education ministers fast-track foreign teachers into classrooms.”
The Australian 13 August 2022

The current teachers were not paid to complete their teaching course.

“Government flags fast-tracked visas for overseas teachers” *SBS* 12 August 2022
“Visas for overseas teachers should be prioritised in a bid to help fill the workforce shortage in the education system, Education Minister Jason Clare says.”

In a microcosm every overseas teacher who fills a position also means that a place of residence must also be found. It is one extra part of the housing market to buy or rent that an existing teacher that might work right alongside will compete for.

f) Increasing the numbers completing Teacher training

“Education ministers to sign off on national workforce strategy before year's end”
ABC 12 August 2022.

Mr Jason Clare said “The graduation rate for teachers is also far lower than for other university students, sitting at just 50 per cent compared to an average of 70 per cent for other degrees.”

There is talk for ways to improve those students to complete their course – and that a rise to 60 per cent completion will go a long way to fixing the shortage. All these “supply” side schemes are only going to delay the shortage later on if we do not fix the real problems in the schools. An initial significant boost will only drain away later.

g) “Why these high achievers left their well-paid jobs to become teachers” *Australian Financial Review* 20 August 2022

“When Jacinda Euler decided to swap her career in advertising for one in the classroom, she knocked back a healthy bonus and an Audi.” This article was a public relations disaster. It was a likely attempt to place an example of professionals who had gone into teaching. It was met by teachers with further disdain as a stunt when it hardly a good example.

6. Declining Male Voice

The summit on 12 August only had one Male teacher from the seven teachers in attendance.

This was so obvious on the day and here the same people were sitting around discussing how they would engage the same experts who helped them to create the problem.

I note that at the Local High School referred to in my first submission the Principal and all four Deputy Principals are all female – despite the school having @ 60% male students.

A former NSW MP in the Legislative Assembly has told me that quite a few years ago they were briefly involved in an inquiry as to why males were not going into Teaching in general – specifically Primary.

After a few days into the inquiry the results were horrifying. Low pay; seen as minding kids; seen as a failure amongst friends who had “male” not “female” type of jobs. The amount of patronising comments was astounding.

The inquiry’s results were so depressing they decided to shut it down with no report.

The 12 August 2022 national summit completely reinforced all this further - with all the visual images appearing on the Television and the profiles of these selected few teachers on Mr Clare’s Facebook page. Every photo and video image appeared to be predominantly female attendees including most of the Ministers and Department Heads.

The great irony is that all these images were presented without this topic of gender imbalance even being mentioned.