

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

CORRECTED

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Friday, 23 September 2022

The Committee met at 4:00 pm

PRESENT

The Hon. Mark Latham (Chair)
The Hon. Anthony D'Adam
The Hon. Wes Fang (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. Scott Farlow
The Hon. Courtney Houssos
The Hon. Aileen MacDonald

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Ms Abigail Boyd

* Please note:

[inaudible] is used when audio words cannot be deciphered.

[audio malfunction] is used when words are lost due to a technical malfunction.

[disorder] is used when members or witnesses speak over one another.

WITNESS A, affirmed and examined

WITNESS B, affirmed and examined

WITNESS C, sworn and examined

WITNESS D, affirmed and examined

WITNESS E, affirmed and examined

WITNESS F, affirmed and examined

WITNESS G, sworn and examined

WITNESS H, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

WITNESS I, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

WITNESS J, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

WITNESS K, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome participants attending this private roundtable of this upper House Committee. We have conducted an extensive inquiry into teacher shortages, and it will be reporting in probably four or five weeks' time to the Parliament and the Government to seek support, hopefully, for our recommendations—or at least a government response to the things that we suggest. Thanks for taking time out of your schedule and, in many cases, travelling a good distance to be here today and help us tackle and address what is not just a complex problem but has multiple elements to it. Teacher shortages are not caused by just one factor; there are many elements at play.

Before we commence, I need to make some comments about our procedures. The roundtable is held in private. It is not being broadcast on the website, but it will be transcribed by Hansard, which is a permanent record of what is said here today. Following the hearing, a de-identified version of the transcript will be placed on the Committee's website. You can speak freely, in that your name won't be identified on the public record of what is being said here today. All participants have the option of making a short opening statement of three to four minutes to give us an outline of your experience with the teacher shortage issue, but the main purpose here today is more a free-flowing discussion about these matters so we can ask some questions and get the important feedback.

While parliamentary privilege applies to what you say here today—so be fully honest in that respect—you need to be a little bit careful if you make any comments outside of the Committee environment. The roundtable is not intended to be a forum to make adverse reflections on others under parliamentary privilege. If you can avoid naming individuals unnecessarily—it may be essential to your argument but, if it is not, just see if you can avoid that. This is a private roundtable and, to ensure the privacy of participants, we ask that you please ensure that any discussions after this roundtable do not identify others who are present here today. Everyone has a right to procedural fairness according to the resolution of the Committee. I particularly acknowledge and thank those who are online and hope they are all able to hear me. We have four people online and seven participants here in the Macquarie room today. We will start with Witness G.

WITNESS G: Thanks for allowing us to voice our opinions regarding the teacher shortages. I have read several submissions given to this inquiry and I have been genuinely shocked regarding the treatment of teachers by the DoE and their ability to exercise bodily autonomy. In a democratic society, under the rule of law, I think it is impossible to see how the DoE was justified in treating teachers in this manner. My first recommendation to address teacher shortages would be for these teachers to be given a written apology, reinstated to a position within the department, and to be compensated for their trauma.

There are significant problems within the DoE that must be addressed to end the teacher shortage. Discipline is becoming a constant issue for those in the teaching profession. Students have become more difficult to deal with and teachers find they are a constant challenge, with student behaviour damaging our psyche. Teachers are often sworn at, belittled, undermined by groups of students, and physically assaulted. This is only going to get worse because of the impending changes to the discipline system to be implemented in term four. There needs to be a genuine cultural shift within our State and nation, if these changes are going to be possible. Not only are teachers attacked by students, but they are also berated by their parents. The hierarchies within schools often do not support teachers, and we are asked to accept poor behaviour from students because they have a difficult home life.

A second significant issue is the growing and incessant administrative workload. The electronic paperwork that teachers are required to produce daily is enormous and untenable. It detracts from our ability to deliver quality

lessons because we are constantly distracted by completing and filing electronic documents, including justifying what we've taught, how we dealt with various behaviour issues, any student meetings or parent contact that we've had, our professional learning records, meeting notes, programming, registrations and following up truancy. Either teachers need to have these paperwork demands reduced or they must be given adequate time to complete this, without it being superficial.

It is important to note that one private school in Sydney has instituted one hour off for every two hours taught. How does the DoE intend to match these improved conditions? Teachers are leaving the profession and do not feel supported in their role because of poor leadership in schools. Teachers and principals are often those who have the skills to do well at interview, rather than those who are talented at leading and managing a school. Principals are not made accountable for falling results. Principals who lack talent are not removed from schools, but rather remain in place as the schools fall apart. Often, they shift their workload down, so that other staff members of the school must take on more responsibility.

Principals and DPs are not visible elements in the school. They devise additional programs for the staff to address falling results, and these programs just become an additional unnecessary burden for staff, rather than improve results. We've seen a shift away from explicit teaching to programs such as inquiry-based learning projects, which don't work. I could go on. We also have problems with social progressivism, which is embedded in the curriculum. We teach climate change as though the science is settled, and all teachers know that we should be expanding inquiring minds. We concentrate on diversity rather than focusing on achieving quality educational outcomes. Our wellbeing departments are rapidly expanding, and we have deteriorating results to show for it.

The CHAIR: Witness G, I think it is important to also let us know where you were teaching. I am assuming you were removed by the mandates policy.

WITNESS G: That's correct.

The CHAIR: Can you give us an outline of which school you were at, and what happened there?

WITNESS G: I have been teaching _____, I was suspended over the mandate period. I have been reinstated to my position in my school.

The CHAIR: Which is your school?

WITNESS G: _____ High School.

The CHAIR: And now you have been reinstated back in your previous position?

WITNESS G: Yes, correct. I'm

The CHAIR: Thank you. Witness F?

WITNESS F: I am a qualified teacher and also an Ahpra-registered provisional psychologist. I've been working in New South Wales schools for between _____ years as a school counsellor, and I lost my job as a result of the mandate. It was terminated in April. Four months later, I am back doing casual school counsellor work. My submission was in regard to the effect of the vaccine mandate on teacher shortages, but I guess I have more experience in terms of the school counsellor shortages, which were very few and far between, particularly in the regional areas.

The CHAIR: Which is your school, Witness F?

WITNESS F: _____ . That was my substantive position, but I am actually doing casual work in the _____. My submission looked at the effect of the mandate in particular on the school counsellor shortages, but also, as the parent of two teenagers, what they've been telling me about the impact of the teacher shortages, particularly as a result of the mandate, on their learning in terms of collapsed classes, teachers teaching subjects that they aren't qualified to teach, casual teachers teaching subjects that they don't know a lot about, missing content, so that the assessment tasks that they are doing are covering content that they never actually were taught. My son has given me some information in regard to his experiences with that.

The CHAIR: How bad are these shortages for counsellors?

WITNESS F: School counsellor shortages were bad before. In my experience—and I've always worked in regional New South Wales _____—it's very rare to have a full team. There's usually one or two vacancies in a team, which means that the senior psychologist, who is meant to be doing supervision and working with executive staff, has to step in and do direct service to schools.

It also means that the small schools particularly are without a counsellor. For instance, I'm back doing casual school counselling work with two small schools, regional schools, and one of them hasn't had a counsellor for a year or more. So you've got students who are going without assessment, they're going for longer without being connected to services and getting the mental health and medical assistance that they need. I guess it's important to realise that to access a paediatrician in my local area for behavioural concerns, they require a school counsellor assessment before they will actually give them an appointment. So it's really critical.

WITNESS E: I've been a teacher in [redacted] for just on 17 years at a couple of private schools. Prior to that I worked for about 16 years in the commercial world. I've been observing the growing teacher shortage for the last 15 years in a number of positions. My description of that would be that I have seen it gradually travelling east, a bit like a dust storm. It used to be just way out west in Wilcannia, Coonamble and those places where you couldn't get teachers. About seven years ago Dubbo and Parkes were finding it difficult, as I was talking to colleagues and peers. About five years ago it hit [redacted] We found it difficult to find teachers. For the last three years it has clearly escalated, the shortage, and it is obviously now at Sydney.

I've got a number of things that I think have contributed to that and some recommendations. I'm going to say, I don't think salary is a key component of that. I think people who work in early child care and aged care are certainly more deserving of pay rises, as they're not paid anywhere near as much as teachers are. The three areas that I have seen—and I note that it's already been commented on—are excessive administration, and I've got a number of things that I'd like to contribute with that; discipline in the classroom, and again, I've got a number of anecdotes of people who have been driven away from that; and permanent roles in schools. In a private school I've been in a position where I've been able to interview and attract really good teachers who simply couldn't get a permanent role in a public school. I fear for my colleagues and peers who have been in that position where they feel undervalued for not being able to get a permanent role.

In terms of excessive administration, a couple of points I would like to make. I started shortly after teacher accreditation came in. I have seen nothing that would indicate that it has added any value to any teaching. I have worked with staff to try to achieve their accreditation. Most recently this week I was talking to a young staff member who was in tears and had to take time off because she simply couldn't get through her accreditation. I absolutely support what Witness G has said in terms of the excessive administration driving people away. Burnout—it's not just exhaustion. It's a lack of efficacy and it's a lack of feeling listened to. Another recommendation I'd make is that there be some kind of overview of what teachers are asked to do comprised solely of people who are currently working in schools, not bureaucrats sitting in head office who keep on coming up with more and more stuff and forms to be filled out and processes and paperwork without giving us time to do it.

WITNESS D: I'm a first-year teacher. I graduated about two weeks ago. I have been teaching for around a year. I started off as a casual teacher in [redacted] at [redacted] High School and about this time last year I moved to [redacted] High School, where I was fortunate enough to get a permanent position through a department scholarship.

The CHAIR: Teaching what, Witness D? Can I just ask you?

WITNESS D: [redacted] In my first year as a teacher, I have already taught an HSC class through to the completion of their major projects and now into their exams, and I'll be having three to four senior classes next year, by the look of the selections of students. As a first-year teacher, despite the support of my colleagues, I feel underprepared to properly support these students in their HSC studies, but there is no-one else qualified to do it. At my school, as has already been said about other schools, a significant number of staff are teaching out of faculty. I was teaching maths at the beginning of the year, and while I can teach maths, I am not a maths teacher. Again, I feel that the students are struggling because of this. Again, as has been said by most other people so far, the workload and the amount of administration is ridiculous.

I have spent at least four hours at school in the last four days, not including my lunch breaks, not including my time spent at home, to catch up on administration and to complete sort of meaningless work, it feels like—basically just ticking boxes or writing paperwork, when I could be planning lessons to teach my students. This administration and this paperwork, especially as a new teacher having to make programs, to write lessons and to create content, has stopped me planning lessons. I do not plan lessons now. The students get what I have time to come up with on the day, and I feel ashamed about that. My students do not get the education they deserve if I do not have time to plan and prepare for it. It is impacting on my mental and physical health. I was never much of a drinker. I drink considerably more now that I've become a teacher, and I know that a lot of other teachers I know do that as well.

I'm a third-generation New South Wales public school teacher. My grandparents and both my parents taught, and now I've taken that up. I was aware before I came in that the pay was not necessarily incredible, that the conditions weren't great, but I was surprised by what has turned up for me. One of the reasons that I stay is because I care for my students. As I said in my submission, I'm about a year in and I'm considering or looking at other avenues of employment. The reason I stay is because I care for my students, but I feel that that is being exploited, and that is one of the reasons why many teachers are still staying. In the last four days I have tried to keep a diary of what I've been doing and I haven't had time. In the last four days I've heard one senior staff member at my school, every day—a different one every day—speak about coming to the end of what they feel that they can do, feeling like they should be leaving the profession because of the workload, because of the behaviour, because of the conditions, as everybody else has said.

I have several pages, and I won't have time to get through them all now, just of issues that I have faced—poor facilities for myself and my colleagues, poor facilities for teaching my students in, a lack of equipment, a lack of resources, broken equipment, classes with no cover. We've had 28 merged classes in the last four days—some of those have been senior. Our school is not badly affected by the teacher shortage, but these effects are evident. As I said, I didn't start teaching for the pay or the conditions, but these may be the reasons that I leave the profession.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Witness D. That's compelling indeed.

WITNESS C: I agree with everything everyone has said so far. I didn't prepare an opening statement and, to be honest, as Liz is aware, I almost didn't come today. This is like facing demons for me, having to talk about all of this. I work—I'm on sick leave at the moment and have been for almost a year. I didn't take the vaccine, have been investigated by PES, found guilty of misconduct, made to feel like a criminal, really, after almost 27 years of service in a south-west Sydney school.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask what school?

WITNESS C: at I've recently been told that my ability to remain there is untenable, that I've been issued with a remedial warning, neither of which has been explained to me. I was invited to ask questions, so I sent an email off asking the reason—what's being remedied with this warning? What's the issue? Why am I being transferred to another school when I know my faculty has been decimated? I'm one of four in the faculty and only one remains at the moment. So they're sending me to another school as an above-establishment teacher. My understanding is that that means they have a full complement of teachers but I'm extra.

I felt very targeted. There is a whole range of issues I'm facing right now. My sick leave with medical certificates has been declined. HR can't solve the problem. They're leaving it with me. My manual applications need to be okayed by the principal, but he's incommunicado; he has just dropped off. When students of mine have said, "I want to be a teacher," I've said, "Don't do it, I don't want to see you go through this," which is really sad because the moments that we live for as teachers—those golden moments where you have the kids, they understand and you can see them making progress—they're very few and far between now. I've been wanting to move on from teaching for some time, but I have a young family, I have financial commitments. Now I'm really in limbo land, so I'm neither here nor there at the moment.

The CHAIR: Which school are they sending you to, Witness C?

WITNESS C:

The CHAIR: What do you teach?

WITNESS C:

The CHAIR: Thanks very much. Now we have Witness B.

WITNESS B: I was a mature age career changer. I have a PhD in After many years of terrible, terrible, terrible job insecurity, the likes of which none of you would possibly have encountered before, being part of the global precariat was too hard and I wanted to stay in Australia. So I first jumped ship to vocational education and training, where I obtained a certificate IV in Training and Assessment via RPL thankfully, because if I'd had to do another TAFE course on top of my already extensive academic career, I would have been very frustrated. Then I discovered that nobody aspires to work in VET because it's quite soul destroying. My soul was being destroyed so I then decided to retrain as a teacher because the one thing I knew it could guarantee was job security.

I retrained as an early childhood teacher because I can walk into any centre in the country and be handed a job on a platter. I guarantee if I walk into a centre anywhere on a Monday morning and say, "I'm an ECT," they'll say, "Can you start work right now? This is your class today." That's how acute the shortages are for teachers. In

the centre I currently work at, we're actually turning parents away at the door because we do not have enough staff to meet our ratio requirements. That's across the whole sector—that's not just teachers but also cert III's and diploma-qualified childcare workers.

Outside of that, though, the entry into early childhood was much less onerous than primary or secondary. Due to my somewhat haphazard and eclectic academic history, I'm also eligible to teach as a secondary or a primary teacher, and with possibly maybe a little additional study I could also teach maths or science—so high-demand areas. I really don't want to do an MTeach or any more practical training because I already had to do 60 days for my ECT. That was unpaid labour where I literally worked for eight hours a day as a teacher. I had to do two components for zero to twos and also for preschool. But the flip side of that was as soon as I'd done that I was qualified to teach at a lower level, so I could work as a cert III while I continued my studies.

The CHAIR: Where are you now, Witness B?

WITNESS B: At a very large provider in Australia, which I won't name because they'll probably suggest that I'm in breach of contract by talking about it.

The CHAIR: It's a childcare or preschool provider, is it?

WITNESS B: Childcare. One of the things that brought me to tears was doing my accreditation. I nearly quit my job over the accreditation process because at the large provider—and I have had conversations with NESAs about this and they are aware that there is some work to be done in supporting large providers in the accreditation process. The process involves—being a provisionally registered teacher you get assigned a supervising teacher. In schools, my understanding is that that would generally be the principal or someone delegated by the principal—so someone within your school. Within my service, that means—and NESAs have given the company I work for and other large providers dispensation to run their own accreditation process.

Sorry, I'm probably going on a bit. But it was all done in-house. Nobody understood the requirements. It dragged on and on for more than two years. In the end, the advice that they—with their support, I actually failed the accreditation process because they'd given me the wrong advice. I spent considerable time outside of my 40 hours a week doing my accreditation documentation. If I hadn't passed that accreditation, I wouldn't have been able to continue working because I would have had no accreditation. I could have worked as a diploma-qualified educator but I'm actually a teacher. That was just beyond onerous to have to go through that amount of work.

The other factors that I think people have already covered are the excessive workloads required of teachers. They are no different in an early-childhood setting. I have to write numerous reports on a six-month-old's achievements against certain learning outcomes. The parents generally find this ludicrous, but that's just the nature of the system. So we do have all of those—the same administrative requirements and so on—but then we also have the added challenges of really physical hands-on care for sometimes very young children, and then the expectations of parents. I think that doesn't change across any education setting—that parents just expect too much from teachers. I think teachers often bear the brunt of parents' anger and aggression and frustration.

The CHAIR: Has anything stopped you from being a primary or secondary teacher?

WITNESS B: Yes, the MTeach. I would have to do an MTeach. I actually enquired at a university recently about how I could transfer from my current ECT to primary and they said, "Yes, you'd just have to do an MTeach." So I'd have to go back to the beginning.

The CHAIR: How long would that take you?

WITNESS B: Two years equivalent full-time. To become an ECT, I just did a one-year Dip. Ed., like in the old days, but that option doesn't exist anymore for primary or secondary.

The CHAIR: The MTeach is something a lot of submissions say should just be 12 months. Would that be acceptable to you, if they brought it down to 12?

WITNESS B: I've heard the arguments for and against. I think there's definitely merit in having a substantive teaching course because you don't want people to be unprepared. But, at the same time, those teaching courses have to be high quality. The Dip. Ed. that I did was an AQF level 9 course and most of the assessments were focused on wideranging, in-depth research essays of a substantive length, so beyond your honours-level work, as befitting an AQF level 9 qualification. But at least one of the subjects was patently ridiculous and the content wasn't relevant to anything you would do as a leader in the field. I think that sometimes the content doesn't match the outcomes because I feel confident that if I did a Dip. Ed. I could teach primary, but I would need the right content delivered to me.

I also have a graduate something or other in university learning and teaching. They can design those courses for all of those different levels, so I'm not convinced that you need to have a two-year course versus a one-year course. But I think it's probably in the way that the courses are designed.

WITNESS A : I am speaking about a reason for teachers leaving that's rarely discussed. How embarrassing for the New South Wales Department of Education to have to admit some of the worst bullies in schools are employees in executive positions. What happened to end my career has unfortunately happened to too many other dedicated teachers I know personally, and others whose abuse stories I know of via the Australian Teacher Support Group. The ATSG—I'll call them "the group" from now on—exists with the common goal of supporting bullied school staff and seeks to end unsafe workplaces. The demographic of our group ranges from teachers in the first year of their career to those who have taught for 20-plus years. Members include men, women, teachers, executives, principals and non-teaching staff.

Many members, the majority who come from New South Wales, have had their teaching career permanently ended and can never teach again due to psychological injury. Others can never work again in any capacity. They are not only left without a career but have no income and often severe ongoing health issues affecting their families and their health for the rest of their lives. Some members are currently on the workers compensation roundabout, unable to return to their school as it is unsafe, and are waiting for the processes to assist them to return safely to their career at an alternative workplace, or for suitable compensation for their workplace injuries—and in many cases this takes years.

We have members who are regularly admitted to hospital for treatment and have ongoing medical issues that include depression, anxiety, PTSD, adjustment disorder, suicidal tendencies and a level of stress that impacts their wellbeing, resulting in other health issues and even premature death. We sadly lost a 50-year-old member of our group under these circumstances in 2019.

The CHAIR: How many New South Wales teachers are in the group?

WITNESS A: No, it's an Australian group now.

The CHAIR: I know it's Australian wide, but how many—

WITNESS A: I don't know the statistics of how many. I don't know—the majority.

The CHAIR: Would it be dozens? A hundred? Hundreds?

WITNESS A: It's 130, or something like that.

The CHAIR: A hundred and thirty, right. Thank you.

WITNESS A: We can't advertise widely.

The CHAIR: I know. I'm just trying to get a handle on the dimension.

WITNESS A: Yes. They were competent professionals, who were good at their jobs and passionate about education. They were subjected to humiliating and demoralising treatment by department employees—the Teacher Improvement Program being an example of a soul-destroying practice, if used incorrectly, which seems to be the case. In the majority of cases there were no repercussions for the perpetrators of the bullying, even though the code of conduct was clearly breached. In fact, quite often the perpetrators were promoted with no record of their actions and the clear breaches having no impact on their career advancement. These, often serial, perpetrators are free to move to various schools across the State, leaving many damaged teachers in their path. The victims are isolated. Many don't put in formal complaints for fear of repercussions and just disappear. The personal stories are horrendous and heartbreaking.

The internal complaints system in place in New South Wales schools needs to be run by an independent body so "mates" aren't investigating "mates". We even have cases of the person who is the bully investigating himself. New South Wales teachers have no voice and are unable to speak out as the code of conduct prevents it. If you write to Sarah Mitchell in any capacity, you are likely to be given disciplinary action. There are no other bodies to assist with the problems faced by teachers. The department is untouchable and the union's hands are tied. The numbers of teachers affected in New South Wales are in the thousands. Workers compensation records, as well as the number of payouts for bullying cases in the courts, should be accessed and data analysed. This money is public money not being spent on educating students but on compensating teachers, who have had their careers ended due to workplace bullying abuse. Please put processes in place to stop workplace bullying in our schools and make those responsible accountable for their actions. Too many great teachers have already been lost to the profession. Just before I finish, I would like to read the last paragraph of my submission, which is No. 156:

When I [was trying] set up ... [this] support group, I ... [got] introduced to—

A teacher, who is probably 10 years older than me, and 10 years prior to me, she was bullied by the same offender. Now, you haven't asked me which school I was at because apparently I'm not allowed to mention it.

The CHAIR: Why can't you mention it?

WITNESS A: Well, I haven't been allowed to before when I addressed the—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You're under parliamentary privilege here. You can say whatever you like.

The CHAIR: You can say. Which school were you at?

WITNESS A: I was at the Public School.

The CHAIR: Which one?

WITNESS A: The Public School on the South Coast—the best school in the area—

The CHAIR:

WITNESS A: —until this serial bully came along and changed things.

The CHAIR: Right.

WITNESS A: He's now happily retired. He got to retire. I got to go through WorkCover.

The CHAIR: You haven't gone into your personal experience. I wasn't asking about the school, but if you can read that last paragraph?

WITNESS A: Yes:

When trying to set up ... [the] group ... I was introduced to—

I'll leave her name out—

She was bully abused by the same principal as I ... only 10 years prior. The ideal target for a bully boss—

A male bully boss—

are single mature women with no husband to defend ... [themselves]. She unfortunately had been hospitalised due to his abuse and was still very unwell the day I met her. She told me her story. We were amazed and saddened at how similarly ... unjust our experiences had been. He had developed his bully modus operandi over a period of time.

The CHAIR: Right. And where's this serial offender principal now?

WITNESS A: He's happily retired.

The CHAIR: He's retired.

WITNESS A: I had to go through WorkCover and lose my job. He got to keep his job. I'll just finish this and then I'll tell you one more case, which is in my submission as well:

One of the most regrettable things about my abuse situation is that if the ... Dept of Ed had dealt with ... [that] serial bully abuser after ... [that woman] made ... official ... [complaints] about him followed by receiving ... compensation ... I may have been spared the psychological, emotional, social and financial ramifications I live with to this day.

The CHAIR: Okay. We'll come back to that other case study later on because we've got to move on. We've got limited time.

WITNESS A: Yes.

The CHAIR: So now we go to the four participants online, starting with Witness I, please? Are you there, Witness I?

WITNESS I: Yes, thanks. Thank you, Chair. I just wish to thank the Committee [inaudible].

The CHAIR: I'm sorry, Witness I. That audio is pretty bad, mate. Sometimes it helps if you can turn your—

WITNESS I: Thank you, Mr Lathan, the Deputy Chair, and all members of the Committee.

The CHAIR: That's it. That should work better now. Could you start again, thanks, because it was just all garbled at our end?

WITNESS I: Can you hear me now?

The CHAIR: Yes, but can you turn off your camera?

WITNESS I: Okay.

The CHAIR: Often it works better if you turn the camera off and we've just got the audio.

WITNESS I: Okay. How's that?

The CHAIR: Yes, it's a bit better, so start again, please.

WITNESS I: Okay. Can you all hear me now?

The CHAIR: Yes. Great. Proceed.

WITNESS I: So thank you to the Chair, Mr Latham, the Deputy Chair and all members of the Committee. My name is Witness I, but everyone calls me "Witness I". I was a high school science teacher at a private boys boarding school in Sydney. That was until August last year when the Premier at the time, Ms Gladys Berejiklian, and health Minister, Mr Brad Hazzard, on the advice of Dr Kerry Chant, implemented vaccine mandates on anyone and everyone working in the education sector, including early childhood, primary and secondary teachers, SLSOs, administration staff, maintenance staff, traffic control staff and learning support staff.

I was fortunate at the time that my headmaster and deputy headmaster were supportive of my decision not to get vaccinated but, unfortunately, many others in the same situation were not so lucky. This became apparent when I released a video calling for all affected staff in education to join a group I had formed along with others called New South Wales Education United. Within two weeks, this private group grew to 7,000 staff members across New South Wales. By the end of the month, we had reached 14,000 members. Once every other State mandated the vaccine for education workers, we opened our membership to all States and, within a week, we had reached 31,000 members nationwide. We changed our name to National United and began a campaign of writing to our local MPs, petitions, phone calls to the Premier and Prime Minister, and eventually nationwide protests each week called Reclaim the Line.

At first we were met with heavy police presence, the threat of rubber bullets, pepper spray and arrest. We still showed up, even in torrential rain, because what you had here was not a bunch of misfits wanting to cause trouble but thousands of ordinary Aussies who just wanted to work without being coerced to take a vaccine that, according to the TGA, was still in its experimental trials. Eventually, the police resistance subsided once they, too, were mandated and a further 300 sworn officers joined our group. Along the way, I met many men, women and children who were extremely traumatised by the way the Department of Education, under Secretary Ms Georgina Harrison, and education Minister, Ms Sarah Mitchell, had treated them. People who had dedicated years of service to education were now being placed under investigation for misconduct because they did not want to receive the vaccine. They were placed on the same "do not employ" list as convicted paedophiles. Families were shattered and destroyed, all in the name of science.

We wrote letters in the thousands to the NSW Teachers Federation and the Independent Education Union asking for help, but they just told us to follow the public health orders and trust the science. The vaccine let us down. We then wrote to the TGA, Ahpra, the AMA, NSW Health, the Human Rights Commission and any other establishment we could reach asking for the evidence and data to show that the vaccines were safe, effective and necessary. This data has never been presented to us. When we submitted a freedom of information request, we were told that it did not exist.

I am here representing the thousands of staff who were let down by this Government, their employers and the New South Wales health department on what is perhaps one of the most shameful and disgraceful periods in our nation's history. The group I lead is strong, united and growing by the day. We will not rest until all mandates are dropped for all sectors of society, not just teachers. I want to state on the record on behalf of the tens of thousands who I represent an appreciative thankyou to the Chair, Mr Mark Latham of One Nation, and Ms Tanya Davies of the Liberal Party, who are the only ones to show support and care enough to attend our protest outside this House to speak to the people of New South Wales.

The CHAIR: We now go also on Webex to Witness H.

WITNESS H: First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge all the homelands that everyone currently is meeting on today, and also live and work on. I've been in education since 2010. I first went into a school when I was just 18 years old as an Aboriginal education officer. Since that time I have supported many different schools and my community in building Aboriginal education programs. I have experience working in a primary setting and also a secondary setting in a support role. Also during that time I have been studying to become a teacher. I'm currently studying at University and I'm one unit shy away from completing my degree. That is my final placement.

I have been through all of my placements. I have passed every single assessment. Right now I have got the final hurdle to jump over and that is LANTITE, which is the literacy and numeracy test for initial teacher education. I was due to complete my degree in 2017, but not being able to meet the standard of the numeracy component to LANTITE has meant that I haven't been able to finish. I went back last year to complete two units. I attempted literacy for the third time and passed but have not met the standard for numeracy at the moment. I have had many meetings with _____ University. Everyone who I have spoken to, including support staff, have encouraged me to exit with a diploma, which means that the final year of study was for nothing because you can't exit the degree before your final year. At the moment I'm currently on interim approval, so I'm allowed to casually teach for the next six months. I've been granted the interim approval for the next 12 months. That is due to run out next year in May.

I'm worried that within this time, whilst preparing for LANTITE and whilst also supporting my community and my family, because I have a young family also, I may not get another attempt at LANTITE from the university. There are a couple of issues with LANTITE. It's got a weighting system. So anyone who sits the test on a particular day, they only take through the top 30 per cent. I'm a person who dropped out of school in my teens at the start of year 9. I have been in a support class through part of my primary and all of my high school education. I'm also a person who has come from a background of trauma. Both my grandparents on my mother's side—my grandfather was a part of the Stolen Generation. He has never received any education whatsoever, as he was taken away when he was only three years old. My grandmother on my mother's side was also forced and kicked out of school when she was in year 3. She was forced to go and work because Aboriginal children could not go any further than grade 3. Whilst that's not an excuse for my education, the ripple effect from my grandparents' experiences at school has then been passed on to my mother and so forth.

I'm the first person in my family to go to university. That's going back probably three or four generations. I'm the first person to ever attend or even attempt university, and I'm almost at the finish line. Another issue with LANTITE is there are four different difficulty levels. There's no way in telling which window you sit your test in or which window of the test is the most difficult and the least difficult. It's also a very standardised test. From my understanding, early childhood teachers have to sit this test, primary school teachers and also secondary teachers as well. There is no specific test for early childhood teachers. There's none also with primary. It's the same with secondary also. I'm not asking for a free pass, but what I would like to see is the weighting system changed so that there's a level playing field for all people who sit the test, not just Aboriginal people. I have spoken to a number of people from different cultural backgrounds and they are also being locked out of teaching because of this test.

The CHAIR: What's the change to the weighting system that you want? What's the current weighting system?

WITNESS H: They only take through the top 30 per cent who sit it that day.

The CHAIR: I see what you mean. The Minister told us that about 6 per cent of people don't go through LANTITE. How is that consistent with taking the top 30 per cent?

WITNESS H: That's what it says on the LANTITE website.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: People might sit it over and over again.

The CHAIR: I think you only get three goes at it, don't you? Three strikes and you're out and you don't proceed.

WITNESS H: Yes.

The CHAIR: It can't be 30 per cent or we would have no teachers getting through, or we would have 70 per cent missing out because a proportion of that 70 per cent would miss a second and third time. We will have a look at that weighting system. It's on the website, Witness H?

WITNESS H: Yes.

The CHAIR: Good luck with completing your last unit and getting through LANTITE. Congratulations on what you've done so far. We will investigate that 30 per cent weighting issue.

WITNESS H: Thank you.

The CHAIR: We now turn on Webex to Witness K.

WITNESS K: I'm the currently-in-the-process-of-retiring Catholic principal from _____ in northern New South Wales. I'm a teaching principal and I have been working as a teacher for 42 years, 21 years of those as a principal. I think the point has been made fairly well that a lot of the expectations that teachers are going through at the moment are being expected by people who aren't teachers.

A lot of the decision-making is happening by people who have no idea and have never set foot inside a classroom. One of my rants that I recently made on social media was around the fact that we're not being asked around the usefulness or whatever of a lot of the things that we're being asked to do. But my point really relates to the problem we have in our teacher training. I have two sons. One is a teacher and one is training to be a teacher. I have supported something like 40 student teachers to become teachers.

I think the move most recently in the last few years to be completely online with no courses that are completely relevant to the school, or what's happening in schools these days—when they do finally get out, like a lot of people have spoken to today, then their initial support is up to the schools. That, in itself, opens a minefield because schools and systems have different ways of supporting our newly accredited teachers. They have a pay model that is good initially that looks like they're going to be able to have a great life, but, don't forget, they've also got HECS fees that they've got to be paying back and there's no growth in that pay scale that supports people to make that lifelong career. After about five years you find that most of them think, "I can't afford to keep doing this unless I go into leadership," and there's another whole kettle of fish of problems.

The NESAs requirements, the local expectations program and reporting, working disability, accountability to so many different agencies, the work that we have to now do with parents and ongoing professional learning—all these things are taking away from the ability to do what we are meant to do, and that's to teach students. The students are missing out because of the amount of time that goes into all that other work. The fact that we're doing all that other work, teachers are not being supported and aren't being trained really well in the first place. My school is a flexible learning school, so we have teachers working very closely together in larger cohorts. There is no university that does any work to support the teachers learning how to do that, so they come into our school and that's our job on top of all the other things that we're already doing. I was led to want to make a submission to the inquiry around the fact that I think if we're wanting to overcome the teacher shortage, we have to look at how we're training those teachers and how we're supporting those teachers as they go into the workforce. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Finally, we've got Witness J online.

WITNESS J: Hello, everyone. I am a high school teacher. I teach on the _____ at _____ High School. I've been there for over 11 years now. I teach in the _____ faculty. I predominately teach _____

My case is that I was impacted directly by the vaccine mandates. Two decisions I've decided to make: one, not to have the actual vaccine itself; and the second decision was because of my health complications that I've had over the years that started in _____

I went down the contraindication route and did the right thing. I tried to follow all the steps and the guidance that I was given by NSW Health and also by the Department of Education at the time. In January of last year I did actually catch COVID and subsequently managed to get through with a six-week exemption from getting the vaccination, which took me up until my two appointments. But, unfortunately, like I said before, I didn't get to see the cardiologist. Fast-forward to managing to have that appointment, I was given a contraindication by my cardiologist and he gave me it for three months. During this year it expired and I went back again to have it reinstated. I went through all the tests and everything with him. I spoke to him on numerous occasions over the phone as well as appointments in the lead-up to the date of when it expired, which was 10 June. I was allowed to teach up until 10 June but come 10 June I wasn't allowed to teach anymore.

I was given an exemption until the end of this year only for that exemption to be declined by Sonic HealthPlus and NSW Health and the education department in relation to the fact that they believed that my contraindication—because I hadn't had an adverse reaction to the first vaccine then they essentially basically said that I needed to take the first one, and if I had an adverse reaction to it then my contraindication will stand. I chose not to do that and, of course, they declined to accept my second exemption from my cardiologist. They had gone through the whole steps with me—who had examined me, who had put me through lots of different tests and things, who knew me and who knew my past medical history—and yet somebody from Sonic HealthPlus, who did not know my past medical history or anything about me, chose to decline my exemption based on their medical experience of me and based on the fact that I hadn't had an allergic reaction to the first vaccine.

I was hoping to get back to work. I was supported by many of my colleagues at school, being the only person in my faculty and in the school, other than a number of casuals who were no longer employed—I think we had five. I was the only member of staff at my school out of _____ staff who didn't go for the vaccination. We did have one teacher who _____

which didn't help with my mental health whatsoever in moving forward.

My students, two year 12 classes, one with a major work—in and many of the teachers will be aware of that. It's 40 per cent of their external mark. They lost their teacher. Nobody else in the school could help them and support them through that. We do have other teachers that are trained. But, as you're aware, with the staff shortages a lot of those classes were collapsed. My classes were sent to the library, where they had no teacher and nobody to support them. In my students' own words when I returned, "Miss, we didn't have you so we just took it as a bludge." They needed guidance at that point in time. Because they didn't have the guidance, they just chose to sit in the library or they chose to wander the school under no supervision. But, again, they didn't have an option. They didn't have anybody to supervise them.

I returned on I used up all of my long service leave and all of my sick leave. I struggled to pay my bills. It's just as well my husband has managed to support us through the last few months. It's been pretty hectic up here in this area based on that. A number of other things that have also impacted us include this new behaviour policy that's coming out. We have a number of staff who are actually on leave at the moment due to bullying from students in the classroom. We lost one member of staff for over eight weeks due to the fact that it took him that long to get his Working With Children Check through.

The CHAIR: Witness J, on the bullying by students, what does that actually involve in the classroom? How does a teacher get bullied? What's the format there that we're talking about?

WITNESS J: One student had been asked by his teacher to remove his hat and he took it upon himself to stand up and belittle and berate the teacher and try to get a whole mob kind of mentality going towards this teacher, and he was quite successful in doing so. We have one academic merit class, which is the top class, and then it filters down. So you have a mixture of behaviours. You've got year classes. The top one is the academic merit class and then the rest below, the following classes, are a mixture of abilities and, obviously, behaviour within those classes.

The CHAIR: What happened to the student with the hat? What were the consequences of a mob turning on the teacher and humiliating the teacher?

WITNESS J: No consequences. He was warned. He was given a talking to. But I suppose you'd be aware of the fact that when you want to suspend somebody, or give them a warning of suspension, you have to have numerous entries on that student or on that child. You know, the system is crazy at the moment with how we are being—I mean, I can't even begin. I am from a behaviour background too.

I can manage my classes and I can manage students. But it is getting harder and harder for somebody like me, who can manage most kinds of students and their behaviour.

The CHAIR: Witness J, we might have to leave your comments there because we are limited in time. If I can put the first topic on the table, it is this question of behaviour. It was mentioned by Witness D, it was mentioned by Witness G, and I think one or two others. What is the solution in the schools? We've heard about the new behaviour policy, which seems to be a "go soft". Witness B?

WITNESS B: Talking to other teachers I know and counsellors as well, the excessive reliance on referrals to counsellors when there simply aren't any—so we need to have full-time counsellors in schools, at minimum. Every school should have a counsellor. That could at least help facilitate removing that burden of behaviour management from some teachers, to a certain degree. That was one recommendation put to me.

The CHAIR: Any other thoughts? Witness D?

WITNESS D: I think we need some forms of punishment or behaviour management that the students respect or the students understand. At the moment our school does suspend some students. It is a struggle because we have to use a program called Sentral and entering behaviour reports on Sentral takes a considerable amount of time. That is our behaviour reporting policy. Doing that means that I have to not do my other work, and I am less inclined to do that because I would like to do the work for the students who are doing the right thing. I know that is a thing across the board with other teachers at our school. But even when we do have a student suspended for behaviour, they might be given 20 days, but they tend to be back in two, maybe four days. They have a spoken behaviour contract, but it is not enforced. There is very little, I think, as a classroom teacher, that I can do to enforce my expectations or to manage student behaviour if they don't want to do it.

The CHAIR: Do you think the problem is worse because the students feel like there aren't any real consequences for bad behaviour?

WITNESS D: Definitely. We've got several students that, if you ask them to do something, they say no. What can we do about that? I have no recourse.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Witness D, you said it takes a while to put in. Can you give us a rough idea?

WITNESS D: It depends on the incident. Our school uses Sentral, as I said, which is an online program. I know there's another couple of them. One is called Compass, I think. They are programs that are sort of an all-in-one system, so they've got your rolls on there, and your report writing stuff, as well as incidents. To create an incident, you go in through Sentral, so you have to log onto a computer. You log into your Sentral profile, open up the incident report section, then you have to identify the students that were involved. You need to take the drop down, select what period, pick another drop down, select the time, select the date, and then you enter a report in about the students. You basically type in what they do.

Depending on what the incident is, what's happened, that might be a couple of sentences or that might be paragraphs. I've had both and I haven't been teaching for very long. Once that happens, it gets passed along to our deputies. They tend to read through. But there are a lot of incident reports that come through and they are also very busy. Our deputies and our principal are actually teaching at the moment, and they are not on teaching loads. They are doing that to basically hold everything together.

The CHAIR: So firmer, stronger, more immediate suspensions would be your recommendation?

WITNESS D: I can't speak for what to do; I don't have that experience. But there needs to be consequences that students respect and understand.

WITNESS B: I have a problem with that, because we talk about it in terms of behaviour management. We talk about time in rather than time out. I'm not sure that more discipline is in the best interests of the students. I understand that students are unruly and difficult to manage, but suspensions have been shown through research-based evidence that they are highly ineffective at improving children's behaviour and they contribute to school attrition.

WITNESS F: I agree with you.

WITNESS B: Yes, it's problematic.

WITNESS F: For some students, to be suspended is actually a good thing for them and it can contribute to them deliberately misbehaving in order to avoid schoolwork, avoid whatever is troubling them, whatever is causing them difficulty in the school setting. And then they are disengaged. You lose them. Not all students, but there's, I guess, the pointy end of those kind of students. I think it needs to be tailored to the student, not a one size fits all. I think it's a really complex—

The CHAIR: What does that mean in the instance of the student with the hat—

WITNESS F: You can't just say—

The CHAIR: —who got the whole class to turn on the teacher, and the teacher is demoralised, humiliated, and nothing happened to that student? What do we do with the student with the hat?

WITNESS F: The way I think about it is it is a lot more complex. You've got a stressed community, you've got stressed families, and they come to school and you've got stressed teachers. And today's youth, you need to work on relationships with them. We are taught as teachers that it's all about the relationship, but teachers don't have the time to build the relationship with the students.

The CHAIR: Of course; they're supposed to teach. It's not the Hare Krishna, where everyone gets to love each other and hold hands. You've got to teach what's expected in the classroom.

WITNESS G: What you're talking about is the restorative justice method, but what you're talking about is immediate consequences for behaviour and that is what some children actually do require. There are kids in your classroom who feel it is their right to actually compete with the teacher to actually teach. You can't teach in some classrooms, particularly when there is not one of those children, there's five of those children. Some of it is just management, because you don't actually get to teach. You feel so sorry for the kids in your classroom who are really wanting to learn, and you can see their little faces going, "Argh, what is going on?" But you can't get there because you've got five kids who literally are trying their very best to take the classroom apart.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask about that issue? From a workload—because, Witness D, you've just indicated that, obviously, every incident is a reporting process. If you've got five kids or six or seven kids in class, as opposed to one or two, that's actually a massive increase on the work and stress that is put on a

particular teacher. I wonder about the distribution of kids who are known to have behavioural issues. What are your views on the strategy around that?

There's been a lot of debate about streaming. I think someone was mentioning the various classes, like the top class, and then the middle-ability classes or mixed-ability classes. You might end up with one class that has got very few behavioural issues, and then the lower ability classes have a high concentration of behavioural problems and are much more challenging and much more work for teachers. I would be interested in your strategies for how we might structure the system, acknowledging that that's a factor and acknowledging that there's a disproportionate allocation of work depending on the complexity of the behaviour of the children that are in the class.

WITNESS B: Another suggestion for that is having more SSLOs in classes. I know they have a different name in the secondary, and I see that the department has been trying to recruit more sort of broader—not counsellors, not teachers, but support officers that are there as youth engagement practitioners, essentially. I think that's a really good step. I think we need to have more auxiliary staff that are there for student support, so more staff in classrooms that are teaching in a team. You might have a lead teacher and then you have your SSLOs to support those troublemakers. They might be able to pull those five or six kids outside and kick a ball around or something while they get their—if they don't want to be in a classroom learning, they can do it differently and they can have different strategies. And then the teacher is left to teach the content, and the students that want to learn are there to learn the content.

This kind of goes back to the early childhood model, where I have a team—because of our age-based ratios and so on, that's how I work. I do have a team. I am a lead teacher, but I have to delegate work. It's not a perfect system because, essentially, I just end up doing 500 things while my auxiliary staff kind of say, "Oh, that's not my role." But sometimes you get good helpers and sometimes, like any job, any workplace, you get good staff and bad staff, so you just have to work with that. But more hands on deck certainly helps us on the load.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is part of the solution more SSPs, like behaviour schools and places where if you are going to remove the kids like you said, it's a good avenue or a good option for some kids, but actually then having programs to make sure that they continue to learn. My understanding is there's a limited number of them and they're really hard to get into.

WITNESS F: Definitely.

The CHAIR: They are being phased down.

WITNESS E: Can I just say, you're talking about kids' right to learn, and that's really important, but it's the other kids who've got a right to learn as well. I think what some of the other people have said about these models and stuff—in my classroom, if a student wants to disrupt the learning of the others I kick them out. They can sit outside the classroom, but I won't put up with kids who want to disrupt the learning of others because it's their rights too. If we now talk about kids who don't want to learn, that's not a choice they get to make. I want to talk to Witness H's experience and say what a great thing he's done to come forward, to put his hand up to be a teacher. He hasn't had the best experience in schooling. I'm actually going to call it a wicked problem because I've just described two different perspectives that I think are irreconcilable.

The CHAIR: Witness H, did you want to come in there? And, if I can just point out, we looked up the LANTITE website and the 30 per cent reference is a literacy and numeracy achievement level equivalent to the top 30 per cent of the Australian adult population. So it's not that 30 per cent get through and 70 per cent fail LANTITE; it is a test that is set at the top three decile levels, so 30 per cent of the Australian adult population would be deemed to pass this literacy and numeracy standard to a decent level.

WITNESS H: Yes, I just looked that up, the information as well, so sorry.

The CHAIR: I don't think anyone is in favour of dropping it so that it's 40 per cent or 50 per cent. I think you've got to have a benchmark there where there is certainly a parental and taxpayer expectation that, yes, it would be fair that teachers are in the top 30 per cent of the adult population in their own literacy and numeracy. If they're only in the top 50 per cent or 60 per cent, it would be deemed as too low. Witness H, your contribution on the disciplinary questions, which I know are topical in the Indigenous schooling community?

WITNESS H: I spent 2½ years at a high school that absolutely probably destroyed me. I almost wanted to walk away from education and not come back. I wasn't a teacher in that secondary school, but I did work solely with the Aboriginal children. We were suspending kids nearly every day. The three schools along the far South Coast had probably one of the highest suspension rates across New South Wales. I personally think there needs to be an alternative education system that sits either within the school or just outside the school that is supported by the community because, at the end of the day, you can't teach kids who don't want to learn or don't want to be

at school. The reality is that we've got children and students who are probably just going to go and work on a farm for the rest of their lives, or they are going to be doing something other than going to university, so I'm a big believer in alternative education systems. I think that may minimise some of those behaviours that are currently happening in schools today because we've got a good amount of students out there who just don't want to be there.

The CHAIR: Witness A, you wanted to say something?

WITNESS A: I do have opinions on other things besides bullying, which is my major subject. You can kick kids out in high school, but you can't do it in primary—the young kids. You can't sit them outside and hope they don't run off.

WITNESS E: I don't think it's a solution.

WITNESS A: No.

The CHAIR: It's a relief for the kids who want to study, isn't it? It gives them some respite from the trouble.

WITNESS A: Of course, we always want the majority to be able to learn, but at the school that I ended up finishing my career at, sometimes if the kids are going off and hurting other kids, the whole class has to leave. We all march out and leave the kid in the room, and then you are out there and you have to come up with something else.

The CHAIR: Witness A, I was going to ask you about a point you made. How is the Teacher Improvement Program used to bully teachers and demoralise them? I have to say, the Teacher Improvement Program sounds pretty innocuous. What happens in practice?

WITNESS A: I didn't have to do one. He got rid of me without doing one. He just made up lies and nobody questioned my support people who were witnesses to the fact that he did not tell the truth. I haven't done a TIP myself.

The CHAIR: But you said it's being used to humiliate—

WITNESS A: All right, I will read this girl's story. It is a good time to bring her story in. First year out—I've met her, I've tried to help her and she has done well.

The CHAIR: Which school is she at?

WITNESS A: It was a school. She is a high school maths teacher, she excelled at uni as a targeted graduate and was appointed to a high school in a permanent role. Within a few months of being there, her head of department—what do they call it, a HOD?—started targeting her. No matter what she did or how hard she tried, her performance wasn't good enough. She was placed on a Teacher Improvement Program and before her first year was over the HOD had failed her. She was escorted off the school premises—and this happens quite often—like a criminal before she even had a chance to collect her belongings and say goodbye to her students. She naturally—

The CHAIR: Wouldn't she go through the PES process, or the EPAC as it used to be?

WITNESS A: This is a real story.

The CHAIR: Yes, I'm sure it's a real story, but I am wondering, where is the evidence as to who is right or wrong and was there any independent—

WITNESS A: This is a girl who excelled at university and got given a job.

The CHAIR: Maybe she wasn't a very good teacher, I'm saying.

WITNESS A: She had done all her prac. She had excelled. She got rewarded with a job, Mr Latham.

The CHAIR: I'm just looking for any evidence or process that verified who was right or wrong.

WITNESS A: When you hear the rest of the story you might—

The CHAIR: Not every single teacher is always outstanding, and obviously—

WITNESS A: That's right, but to get a permanent job after uni is usually an indicator of a fantastic teacher.

The CHAIR: Okay, but I'm looking for evidence of that classroom result or how she was going.

WITNESS A: Let me tell you her story. Before her first year was over the head teacher failed her. She was escorted off the premises. Naturally she worried all through the summer holidays and, in term one of the following year, was instructed to sit in the Department of Education office—she was not allowed to go to school—

to await a decision re her career. One very sad aspect of this particular teacher's abuse journey is that every day she left her home pretending to be going to school so her parents wouldn't worry. This is a first-year-out teacher—they need support; they don't need to be told everything they are doing is wrong.

The CHAIR: Isn't there an appeal process for a circumstance like that where she could say, "I've been—

WITNESS A: Appeal? We know about appeals. Anyway, I need to finish this just to give you the idea. Yes, she was pretending to go to work so her parents didn't worry about her. She wouldn't tell them what was happening and she lived with them. Each day there was no work to do—just sit and wait and no doubt stress. Some of the teachers on TIPs use that time to fight their case, but she didn't.

The CHAIR: Why didn't she fight her case?

WITNESS A: She was a beginner teacher. I didn't even know about—I taught for 35 years and had never heard of a Teacher Improvement Program.

The CHAIR: Witness A, there is no need to raise your voice. We are trying to get to the facts.

WITNESS A: I am emotional.

The CHAIR: Some things need to be verified before our Committee.

WITNESS A: Of course, and I am trying to get this story out.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

WITNESS A: It is my emotion—it's not rudeness, it's emotions. The EPAC investigator—now PES, though I don't know whether that's any better or worse—was expecting a baby, so a decision was made in a more timely fashion than usual before the Easter break. Some unfortunate teachers are left in limbo for two or three terms. Her position was terminated. Now, remember, this was a beginner teacher, just like our Witness D. A bit of tolerance and support and positivity in her first year of teaching wouldn't have gone astray.

She was given permission to work on a casual basis. Her scholarship would have to be repaid also. Despite the appalling treatment inflicted on her, she persisted. I don't know how. The sad thing is that when she was offered a position at the Catholic schools system, she felt guilty for letting down the public system. I've got another example here.

The CHAIR: No. You have covered that. Do you know how many teachers in New South Wales are sacked each year for underperformance?

WITNESS A: I'd love to know.

The CHAIR: In the whole system out of 80,000 teachers, two or three.

WITNESS A: I don't believe it.

The CHAIR: That's what the department reports year on year.

WITNESS A: I don't believe that.

The CHAIR: She must have been desperately unlucky.

WITNESS A: Doesn't everybody who is decent think that a first-year-out teacher needs support?

The CHAIR: We don't know her and we don't know the circumstances in classroom performance.

WITNESS A: I know that she excelled at university.

The CHAIR: You've read out an account without any detail or testimonial from her or the teacher who did this.

WITNESS A: This is with her permission to tell her story.

The CHAIR: I was asking how the Teacher Improvement Program is used to bully people. We've got your answer and we appreciate that.

WITNESS A: That is for a first-year-out teacher.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Witness D, you raised an issue which we've heard quite a bit through the inquiry, which is about paperwork and the amount that that is causing distress for people in the profession. As I think we heard from John Hattie in evidence before the Committee, it is students who make teachers want to stay. I've heard that from everyone around the table, that it's the leaders but the paperwork issue as well which is causing a great burden. I am interested in what that actually looks like. I think you went through a little bit of an

example when it came to what that looked like when it was managing students and managing student discipline. You've got a drop-down box and the like that you have to go through. It sounded like quite a rigmarole to go through. What are some of the other things that are making your day harder?

WITNESS D: I have sort of tried to record my last four days at work.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I might get you to do that and I will ask other members at the table as well, particularly people who have been in the profession for quite a long time, as to how different that is from when they started in the profession.

WITNESS D: As an teacher, my role is a little bit different

In the last four-ish days I have prepared—for today, for example—lessons for a casual teacher to take. Our school has given us a lesson template, and I need to fill out all the different parts of that lesson template for the casual teacher to be able to teach. They've asked us for a learning intention and a success criteria, which come from Mr Hattie. Then we fill out what the teacher is expected to do and what the class is expected to do, and then create some resources to go with it, if that's what the nature of the lesson is.

For me, as teacher, my work is primarily practical. For my planning of lessons, I always have to sit down and write a theory-based document or a written task for the students to do, because that's not what I normally do. So that adds a bit more to my workload in that respect. We have marking to do. With our HSC students, we mark their work and we record evidence. We record evidence of absolutely everything they do—our contact home, our contact with students, their reports, their attendance, their average grades. We have work samples all the way.

The CHAIR: That's a good thing by the sounds of it, though, isn't it?

WITNESS D: Yes and no. All of this is recorded digitally. One of the things that I've been doing in the last couple of weeks is the HSC monitoring folder. This is an A4 binder that goes with them through year 11 and year 12. Every piece of paper that we give them—every note we send home, every report we write, everything—is in there in duplicate to their digital copies of that stuff. That's there so that if five years down the track one of the students comes back and says they were underfunded by their teacher in this area of their course and that's why they didn't get such a good HSC mark, we have evidence to back that up. The stupid thing is that no-one is going to look at that in the next five years and then it gets chucked out. So that is one of the examples of the meaningless paperwork we do.

We also do marking. Again, we do report writing for other grades. We do behaviour management plans sometimes. For every student in my classes—I teach six or seven classes—who has a behaviour management plan or who I implement differentiation for in my teaching, I have to fill out, I think, a six-page tick-a-box document about all the different things I do for them, which correlated with the plans that were already in place. I've got lots of other stuff on top of that, but I won't bore your time. It is typically that same sort of thing.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You can have 10 minutes.

The CHAIR: If you can outline it, that's why we're here.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That's not a bad point, if you would like to tender it.

The CHAIR: The paperwork version needs to be understood in full.

WITNESS D: I have printing that I do, obviously, for my students. It would be nice to have an assistant who could do some of that and some of the collation of information or work to make for the students. Again, HSC evidence, which we've talked about before. Ordering materials. As an teacher, I am slightly different from other teachers and other faculties because

Again, researching content. There are some other things but I think that covers most of our bases really.

The CHAIR: Witness G?

WITNESS G: I did talk to that before. But, yes, Witness D is right with all the NESA documentation, which I do think is important. In our school teachers can do that physically but we also have a requirement in our school to do that electronically. Yesterday I had an office staff member come to our department for four hours. She scanned and uploaded—actually, I ended up uploading it—one teacher's documentation in four hours. That gives you a bit of an example of the length of documentation that we have to keep.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: This is initial accreditation, is it?

WITNESS G: No, this is just NESA accreditation. She was our teacher. She keeps her documents physically. One staff member spent four hours uploading her document.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: To renew her accreditation or to get initial efficiency?

WITNESS G: No, just to keep records for NESA if they came into our school. Because, as said, we have all these electronic folders that must be maintained and she doesn't like doing that until it's all done. We have a requirement in our school, and it's in my department, that every program must be registered and uploaded by the end of the term.

WITNESS D: This is for the year 11 and 12 student evidence.

WITNESS G: Well, we do it for 7 to 12. Perhaps it's overkill. I don't know. Anyway, that's the expectation on me so I have to pass that on to staff, and that's what they do. Witness D is right about any parent meeting we have. Any meeting with a student, you've got to record that because they might say, "Johnny said this," and, "Sarah said that," and you've got to have some evidence of what actually went on. This is on top of keeping all of our professional learning records up to date.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is a lot of covering your back, isn't it?

WITNESS D: Yes.

WITNESS G: One hundred per cent. It is about accountability but it's also about if we're challenged on something, I suppose, we have to have evidence to support what we're saying.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Has this been like a frog in boiling water, so to speak, that it's come on over the years and you haven't really noticed it? Or has there been any cataclysmic event?

WITNESS G: No. Because I've taught for so long—in the first 20 years of teaching I would have had, and I do say this often, five difficult conversations with parents. Now I have five a fortnight, probably. They're attacking us, so we definitely need evidence of what we're doing. This administration, this administrivia, in the last 10 years it has increased exponentially.

WITNESS E: Can I provide a contrast? I'm a maths and science teacher. I'm a year and year coordinator. I work in a private school. I recently took a week off for a holiday and it took me about three hours to work with the relief teacher who was taking over my class up to HSC to pass over the stuff because he was also an experienced teacher and didn't need all of that documentation. That year 12 folder that Witness D is talking about I don't have. I hugged my students on Wednesday afternoon when they finished for their HSC and wished them all well, and they'll do well in their HSC. I don't do that back covering stuff. I don't fill out all that documentation. We scan three documents for the NESA school accreditation requirement for each assessment task we do, and there are three or four of those, and that's it. I spend the rest of my time teaching and looking after the welfare of year and year students, and I love it. I really sympathise with my peers here who don't get to do that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is that because it's a decision that your school has made or is that a personal decision that you have made?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That's the difference with the private and the public system, isn't it?

WITNESS E: It's a bit of both. I've made it and I'm confident. I've been around a while. I'm confident in what I can do, but the school doesn't—I mean, these folders that I've heard about recently are just a nightmare. I've had anecdotes—I went and collected anecdotes. One of the comments I made was that we are able to get good teachers to come and work at our school because they are sick of filling out the folders that filling out. So they come to us and go, "That's great. We don't have to do this and this and this," and also do the paperwork just because a student has done the wrong thing and they turn up the next day as if nothing has happened and they just laugh in the face of the teacher. I feel really fortunate. I'm sympathetic to my peers, but I just want to share my story to say that I'm going to keep teaching and I'm not in as bad a position.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Witness E, you're in the private system. Is that correct?

WITNESS E: I am, yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Have you always taught in the private sector?

WITNESS E: Yes, I have.

The CHAIR: The education department say they've got a push to reduce paperwork. Is there any evidence it's having any impact?

WITNESS G: Zero.

WITNESS D: I might add, as my HSC students were completing their major works—so I had studies students. They make a major work It was due at the start of this term. Last term I would get to school at the mandated time of about 8.30 a.m. and I would stay until at least five o'clock every day. Not every day was with students—sometimes I let them hang back to work on their projects—but every day doing paperwork and I still didn't catch up. Now, whether that's because I'm a new teacher or not, I can't speak to because I have programs to write that other teachers might not.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can I ask you, Witness D, would it help if there had been some kind of standard lesson program or something that had been provided to you at the outset? So as you become more experienced like Witness E, you could refine it and maybe add your own thing in. It seems to me that there is a huge volume of work that's put onto teachers at the very beginning, and we heard from the department today that the resignation rates are really high, about 11 per cent in public schools in the first five years. So if we could find some way of giving you more support in those initial years so that once you do get more confident, like Witness E—it might take a few more years—just so you've got at least a starting point. So that, in addition to the marking and to the behaviour stuff, you're not trying to recreate the wheel, so to speak.

WITNESS D: I was sort of fortunate, sort of unfortunate. I'm actually teaching

and one teacher shortly after left because he was just sick of it, so he's now teaching at TAFE as a casual teacher. I got some programs and some resources from them, but I missed out on a lot of resources as well due to that change. So some things I have, some things I don't. The things I don't, I need to make.

The other thing is, if you try and provide a standard thing, education is not something that can be mass produced. We are talking about individuals with individual styles of learning, individual talents, individual background knowledge, individual cultural associations. There is a whole range of work on the impact of your cultural background on the way you learn and how well you learn and the things that you like to do. There is a whole bunch of stuff. Basically what it boils down to is every learner is an individual with individual needs, and that's why we differentiate. So if you provide us with a basic standard, that might help, but it would not be a one-size-fits-all approach.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I understand that there is an art of teaching and the whole point is that as you become more experienced, you can apply your experience and what you've learned at university. It just strikes me that we ask so much of our initial teachers. You literally pop out of university and we put you in a classroom and say, "From scratch, you need to produce your programs," and you need to be able to do all of these things that it can take decades to learn to do. So what are the things that we can do to support those early years in a better way, to reduce the initial burden on teachers?

WITNESS D: I was really fortunate to be part of a department program—like a scholarship, but I was more of an intern, so I was paid intern at I started at 17 years old, straight out of school, into my teaching degree. As part of this program, I worked two days as a teacher's aid, of a sort. I was able to float around in the faculty, so I learned what the school looked like, I learned how it operated, and they've been able to provide me with some resources. That was the most valuable thing I think we could do for young teachers—an apprenticeship, of a sort.

WITNESS B: Yes, I agree.

WITNESS D: Unfortunately, that program doesn't exist anymore.

The CHAIR: What was it called, the program?

WITNESS D: I was a cadet. It was the initial—no. I will have to find out for you. I'm sorry, I can't remember off the top of my head.

WITNESS B: I have to say, in early childhood it's distressing the amount of paperwork that people do in their off-work time. I have already mentioned that I work a 40-hour week. It's higher than the national employment standard because of the contract. One of the first things I do with my new teachers is say, "Do not work overtime. You're not getting paid for this. Either it gets done or it doesn't. Don't worry about it if it doesn't because that's not your responsibility." To a person, they all do it at home, in overtime. They're answering messages from parents in their time at home because of this online thing that we use for sharing information with parents—to a person, and it absolutely drives me to distraction that they do that. The second point is my company went through a phase of

trying to recruit new grads, gave them zero support whatsoever and they all quit within a year because it was too hard.

I think definitely part of that initial training on the floor—and, as I said, I thought it was much easier because I knew what I was doing. I deliberately targeted the sector I wanted to work in. I structured my studies, so I uploaded my prac first so that then I could work as a qualified but lower paid childcare worker and I deliberately had this all laid out because I was already an adult with adult commitments when I decided to become a teacher. I had limited time and resources, so I had to think about those strategies, and that's how I teach too. I would never reply to a parent email outside of my mandated working hours. That is just not something that I am ever going to do. I don't even answer my boss's text messages outside of my working hours. But I know this is really uncommon, and we need to push back on that culture that teachers are available 24/7 because, I'm sorry, but I'm not. I've got a life; I've got things to do.

The CHAIR: I don't think that's the parental expectation. I don't think any parent ever thinks they're ever going to find a teacher on the weekend or the 12 weeks of holidays during the year.

WITNESS B: You'd be surprised.

WITNESS G: Yes, they do—absolutely they do.

WITNESS B: You would seriously be surprised.

The CHAIR: Not in my experience.

WITNESS G: Yes, they do. They will email you any time they feel like.

WITNESS B: That's right—any time.

The CHAIR: In what sort of volume?

WITNESS B: A lot.

The CHAIR: Even around Christmas time?

WITNESS B: Especially around Christmas time.

The CHAIR: When you're on holidays?

WITNESS B: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm interested to know about the mid-career transition. Obviously we've heard a lot about the shortages and one of the things has been the admin burden, but I'm interested to know, because you've actually done it—as well as anyone else's thoughts—about how we can make that mid-career transition for teachers easier, or what are the barriers at the moment, or do you have any advice for us?

WITNESS B: Yes, I have lots of things to say. Like I said, I really specifically targeted early childhood. The course was shorter, it was online and it was appropriately at that AQF level 9 so I didn't have to do those stupid group assignments where one person does all the work and nobody else does anything, like you do in your undergrad days. I could do practical training and the course was excellent, except for a few bad parts. Then I was able to get in on the floor and start learning my job hands on.

One of the things I noticed was there is one particular MTeach course that covers zero to fives and primary as well. Those teachers in particular are terrible. They come out of that course with zero practical experience whatsoever, despite having done their practical content training. So they've been on practicum but they have absolutely no hands-on experience. When I get those teachers in my workplace, I have to start retraining them again. It takes them months and months and months to get up to speed. I don't know what's happening with that course, but we all roll our eyes when we hear that someone has recently graduated from that program.

WITNESS A: But you don't put them on teacher improvement programs in their first few months of being there, do you?

WITNESS B: There are also instances of teachers being bullied out of the profession in my workplace too. What happens is they go on extended leave and then we never see them again.

WITNESS A: Yes.

WITNESS B: In some cases, because it's a company I work for, they are instructed not to talk about the matters, and that's it. Obviously they are bound up in some kind of legal agreement, so we never know what's happened, and they just disappear. In many cases, these have been excellent teachers. Initial teacher training needs to be fit for purpose. It needs to reflect adult content and be taught at an adult level for busy people. It needs to be

available when they're available. So I did mine nights when I had a very young child. I'm also a carer of a person with a disability, so I had to be really organised in how I did my studies. I did my practical training. It was excellent. I was fortunate to work with some really great people who showed me the ropes of the job. Then I was able to learn my teaching theory on top of that. Over time I became more adept at my teaching role.

The CHAIR: How can it be improved?

WITNESS B: Free courses. HECS is already pretty cheap for teacher training, but make it free and get people in on the floor. I heard, when you all had a conflagration in Canberra—the education Ministers recently went to Canberra to talk about teacher shortages. There was some talk about having something like Witness D did, like a cadetship program or whatever for initial teacher education students. If that was offered, I would probably switch to primary tomorrow because I'm getting old. I don't think I can sit on the floor singing nursery rhymes for that much longer. I think possibly it might be less physical. I'm probably wrong, primary teachers? So I'm thinking about my long-term sustainability personally. But I think you need to make it free and you need to make it easier to get into. You need to maybe look at some exemptions to that LANTITE for particular cases, as we've heard about today, because people are going to have a wide variety of backgrounds.

Another thing that I've encountered, from other teachers I've known, is when they've come from different jurisdictions there's no national standardisation of the accreditation process. I know of one very experienced teacher who had left teaching due to the administrative burden of paperwork and then, as her personal circumstances changed, realised that casual teaching would actually be quite suitable. The rigmarole that she had to go through just to be able to work three days a week as a casual teacher, and throughout the entire pandemic she was—she lives across the road from her local primary school and yet she couldn't just walk in and say, "I'm a teacher. Here's my paperwork. Call me when you need me." That's one thing. But now that she's accredited in this jurisdiction, she has to start at the beginning again and go through her initial accreditation process. That's not fair.

WITNESS E: Can I also contribute? In 2006 I left the commercial world. I cut my salary in half to become a teacher. My three children were born in different States and I wanted to be there with them as they were growing up. That was part of my decision. I started teaching in 2006 and completed my initial teacher training at the end of 2008. The school I worked at probably had about 20 people who had gone through that pathway—who had started teaching with qualifications. In my case, I've got an honours degree in But we had builders. we had lawyers and we had mechanics. In fact It took him five years to complete his initial teacher training on top of being a mechanic. All of these people are fantastic teachers. Most of them are still teaching. All of them taught for at least a decade.

When I inquired with the department, they said they'd give me a scholarship to do my teacher training, guarantee me a full-time job at the lowest salary level in Bourke. I said, "Don't call me." It was very, very unattractive. At the school that I worked at initially, the relationship with students was fantastic and the discipline was great. With so many mid-career people, who are confident, knew their stuff and were able to walk in and bring some real-life experience—I value the people, especially like Witness D, who have made a commitment for their lives. There was a good mix of us, and that mix was fantastic.

The teacher training I went through would be best described as appalling. I think there was about half an hour of content that I actually used. The apprenticeship model—I think TAFEs would probably be much better at teaching teachers because it's that vocational education, that practical experience stuff. As Witness B said, we get people from MTeach who don't know how to teach. I think there is definitely plenty to take on from that. Again, I know my experience is very different to what many other people have. I've loved every minute of my teaching.

The CHAIR: That's great, fantastic. We're running up against time a little bit. Witness I, of the members of your group affected by the mandates, what proportion of them have now dropped out of teaching, just given it away as a product of their experience?

WITNESS I: The last poll that we put out was a couple of months ago. We probably had about, in total, 25 per cent dropout. But that was due to either early retirement, resignation, new careers as well—people just fell out of passion with the profession—trauma. Some had gone on workers comp. There was a whole range of reasons why. Basically, they haven't gone back to teaching. But it's probably around 25 per cent. When we put a poll out a couple of months ago, we had 5,000 that responded in answer to the poll. The number collectively was 25 per cent basically out of the profession.

The CHAIR: You said you had 14,000 in New South Wales, so 25 per cent would be a bit over 3,000.

WITNESS I: Yes.

The CHAIR: You're estimating 3,000 teachers were lost through the mandates?

WITNESS I: Yes, you can take that from that number.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Are there other questions from Committee members—Scott Farlow, Anthony, Courtney? No? Are there any other final comments that the roundtable would like to make because it's been incredibly useful. I've taken more notes from you than I did the education department, so that's one sign. Witness A?

WITNESS A: I think we'd all agree teaching is a challenging enough job without the extra stress of being targeted by a bully in a position of power. Now, I'll just finish on this note, that the abuser—I try to concentrate—that's why read the story of another person because I don't want to just tell my story; there are many other stories. But the abuser in my case had earned the nickname "The Cleaner" before he got to my school. I learnt that after I'd already been cleaned out of my job. He was a serial abuser. It is disgraceful that teachers who are medically retired are put on that "not to be employed" list that somebody else mentioned. Your people on the mandate—

WITNESS C: I was threatened with being placed on that list and now everything's sort of up in the air. But, yes, it's interesting.

WITNESS A: Yes. It's a horrible way to be treated.

WITNESS C: It is and I mean my school was rather a toxic environment prior to all of this and now there's just that, together with my experience with the department. What everyone has said here about the shameful treatment of teachers by PES and the DoE has put me off teaching altogether. I don't know whether I will be able to walk back into a classroom again.

The CHAIR: Witness K, you've got your hand up. Please.

WITNESS K: I just wanted to make the point that it's great to think about having those people with those lovely skills coming into our high schools but we really have to be careful about people being able to retrain for primary school, particularly when we have such a literacy and numeracy agenda that we are struggling with—you know, NAPLAN and all those things we keep hearing about. We have to be really careful that the teacher training is actually teaching our teachers in primary schools how to teach them to read, how to teach the literacy and numeracy skills. So we have to have a think about its fine in high schools to be thinking about that retraining but only certain types of people have those skills to do primary school.

The CHAIR: Are there other final thoughts?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: There's another one on the screen.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Witness J.

The CHAIR: Right, yes, Witness J.

WITNESS J: I was just wondering where to next, Mark? So what's going to happen as a result of this? Is there going to be—I know you said there'll be a transcript and things going out, but where to next for those teachers?

The CHAIR: Well, our Committee will make a report and recommendations because, as you can tell from the discussion today, it's a multifaceted issue. There is no one cause of the teacher shortages, so there's many, many elements involved and we'll make recommendations about those before the end of the year. The Government either accepts or rejects our recommendations but these recommendations also inform other parties, including the Opposition, which is obviously very keen to not only win the next election but to do something about the teacher shortage problem. So it's something that is a critical issue in education. Our Committee's role is to try to add some value to the consideration of the public policy ramifications of it and what needs to be done.

WITNESS J: Thank you.

WITNESS E: I have three points I'd like to make. First and most importantly, I want to speak up again for Witness H. We want to have teachers that reflect our community and I think, as you said, Mr Latham, you've got to be in the top 30 per cent of literacy and numeracy.

The CHAIR: In the country.

WITNESS E: That doesn't represent—

The CHAIR: In the country.

WITNESS E: —the students because we've got 100 per cent of the community.

The CHAIR: No. It represents the teachers.

WITNESS E: I understand.

The CHAIR: I don't think there's many parents who want their kids taught by someone who's below that 30 per cent standard of literacy and numeracy. Hasn't teaching got to have a degree of excellence—

WITNESS E: And my point is—

The CHAIR: —to it, expressed in that 30 per cent benchmark?

WITNESS E: —that I've seen so many people who come from a diverse background—some of the best biology teachers have been farmers, who wouldn't meet that standard and have done a fantastic job relating to the students.

The CHAIR: Maybe they would be teaching agriculture.

WITNESS E: Certainly, but I think that just by having a blanket ban and locking people out by meeting that LANTITE standard I think means there's a whole cross-section of our community that aren't represented in our classrooms.

The CHAIR: Well, 6 per cent. It's only 6 per cent who miss out and the test is there as a benchmark of quality. The recommendation that I'm interested in is to say, well, at least you should do it at the beginning or closer to the beginning of your teaching so it's not three or four years down and you've wasted all your time. I think that makes a lot of sense. Find out: Are you in the 94 per cent who pass early on and then you go on and, if you miss out, then you can pursue other options. But the main complaint I hear is people who say, "Oh, well, I did three or four years and then I didn't pass LANTITE and I wasted the whole experience."

WITNESS E: I understand and I think my point is that there are so many people who are choosing other things and if you're only choosing from 30 per cent of people in the population who are saying, "Well, I'll access careers that earn substantially more money or have more rewards or more prestige", then you're not going to fix the teacher shortage. The other two points I would make are: First, the accreditation system that came in in 2004, with all the money that's gone into education, there is no evidence that that has had any impact on teacher quality. I would challenge this Committee to recommend that should be simply scrapped because it's so much administration for no gain whatsoever and in fact it does damage.

The CHAIR: Well, it does seem like it's a bit of a joke because it's not supported by regular classroom monitoring of practice and improvement.

WITNESS E: And the third point that I would make is that teachers are trusted to be locked in a classroom full of students, but the administration doesn't trust us to do our job properly. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Okay. Witness I, you've got your hand up.

WITNESS I: Yes. I just want to state that the 25 per cent, that also includes all staff in education.

The CHAIR: Right.

WITNESS I: So it could have been the admin staff. It could have been maintenance staff, cleaners, early childhood, primary and secondary teachers.

The CHAIR: Thanks for that. So it's probably over 2,000 teachers lost, minimum, and there's other staff involved as well.

WITNESS I: At least, yes. At least.

The CHAIR: Well, it's been an excellent session. I want to thank everyone for coming along and giving us your time, experience and expertise. I'm sure everyone around the Committee has benefited from the views. Have a good weekend. The school holiday, I suppose, is upon us as well, so beat the traffic and travel safely. Thanks again.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: No-one will sack you. It's in confidence and de-identified.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Evidence in camera concluded.)

The Committee adjourned at 17.54.