

**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 1:34 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.



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**The Hon. WES FANG:** Welcome to the fourth hearing of the Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education inquiry into teacher shortages in New South Wales. Before I commence, it is the custom of the Parliament to acknowledge the traditional owners, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge any Indigenous people who might be in the audience or watching online and thank them for their custodianship of our lands. Today we will be hearing from the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People as well as representatives from the NSW Department of Education.

Before I commence, I will make some brief comments about procedures. Today's hearing is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript of today's hearing will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, media representatives are reminded that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. While parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses giving evidence today, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of their evidence at the hearing. Therefore, I urge witnesses to be careful about comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence.

Committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections about others under the protection of parliamentary privilege. In that regard, it is important that witnesses focus on the issues raised by the inquiry terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. All witnesses have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. If witnesses are unable to answer a question today or want more time to respond, they can take the question on notice. Written answers to questions on notice are to be provided within 21 days. If witnesses wish to hand up documents, they should do so through the Committee staff or, for those witnesses appearing via WebEx, by emailing them to the secretariat.

To aid the audibility of this hearing I remind both Committee members and witnesses to speak into the microphones. For witnesses appearing remotely, please ensure your microphone is muted when you are not speaking. We have a number of witnesses in person and via videoconference today, and it will be helpful if Committee members could identify who they are seeking to direct the questions to. For those who have hearing difficulties and are present in the room, please note that the room is fitted with induction loops compatible with hearing aids that have tele-coil receivers. Finally, would everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing.

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**Ms ZOË ROBINSON**, NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, affirmed and examined

**Mr CAMPBELL QUINTRELL**, HSC Student, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Thank you to the Deputy Chair, Wes Fang, and thank you to Ms Robinson and Mr Quintrell for being here today. I'm sorry I was just a little bit late but driving in from western Sydney wasn't the easiest assignment in the weather we've got. Thank you for being here for the inquiry into the teacher shortages in New South Wales. Ms Robinson or Mr Quintrell, would you like to make an opening statement?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** I would like to. I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians and first peoples of the land on which we gather today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I'm here today representing students. Students that are being heavily impacted by the chronic teacher shortage. Students that are arriving at classrooms without a teacher. Students whose dreams and aspirations aren't being nurtured. I'm here representing students that, like me, feel as if they are being forgotten and ignored in this conversation, even though we are suffering the most due to the shortage. As an integral part of a functioning school system, I believe we deserve to be listened to and included in creating solutions to the issues impacting our school system the most.

Students are not blind to the issues around teaching, and we know how those issues impact us. Teachers are not being provided with a relevant university education, effective early career support and manageable workloads. This has resulted in the school system not providing students with a quality education that can nurture our talents and prepare our futures. We need to formulate a holistic solution where each variable affecting the teacher shortage gets the attention required to solve it. I'm here for my sisters, friends and every current and future student, who deserve nothing less than a quality education.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Robinson?

**ZOË ROBINSON:** I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I only have short words to say. Thank you to the Committee for welcoming a young person today. Campbell has travelled from Broken Hill. Obviously, these are his words and his truth. We're very grateful for the Committee to be hearing directly from him today. Thank you.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Thank you, Campbell, for coming, and thank you, Ms Robinson, for facilitating Campbell's attendance. It's always good to hear from young people. Their voices are frequently ignored, and they don't get the appropriate attention that they really deserve, so it's useful to have you here today. I want to ask you about the disruption that you've experienced as a result of the department not being able to provide the necessary teaching resources for your school. Could you tell us a little bit about situations where you've found that you haven't had a teacher or you've had casual teachers or a churn, and elaborate on some of those experiences that you've had?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** Yes. Thanks for the question. Throughout my entire high school experience—prior to COVID, during COVID and even coming up to my last days, which were only this week—I've had classes without teachers, casual teachers, teachers on temporary contracts who we just know are going to leave because that's just how it is at my school. There's an extremely high turnover rate. It's never ending, it seems like. Regardless of the policies that come out, it seems to get worse and worse every single year.

Probably the worst experience I've had with teacher shortages would have been in year 10 with my English class, which I wrote about in my submission. We had an amazing teacher for the first semester—one of the best English teachers I'd had to date. I was excelling in the class. I was enjoying English for probably the first time ever, and it probably is what has made me love writing like I do today. It's probably the only reason I've made it through school. I can thank that teacher for that. We were the top of the year in English, and then, at the end of term two, he left, and we were in a classroom with constant casuals and temporary contracted teachers.

We went from the top class to the bottom class. The behaviour of some of the students spiralled out of control because it wasn't an environment that they wanted to be in anymore. English wasn't enjoyable. We weren't learning. The assessment results dropped. In-class engagement dropped. Behaviour dropped. It was a very bad experience, and it's not uncommon for students to experience that. Sometimes they go through it for a whole year, sometimes it's a term, sometimes it's half a term. It's really difficult when you don't have that strong teacher/student relationship.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Did the teacher you spoke about leave mid-term, or was it midyear?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** He left at the end of term two, so going over into the second semester was when he left.

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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What was the reason why he left? Was he promoted, or did he get a posting somewhere else?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** He was leaving to, I believe, go to a metropolitan school. He'd received a job in a metropolitan school. He was a father, and he wanted to take his family away from Broken Hill for a better education. The job obviously paid better, and it was a better school environment to be in, with resources for teaching and stuff like that. We all know it's very hard to be a teacher in a regional area. It's just a better environment for him and his family, so he decided to move away. He always told us how much he wanted to stay and see us through for the whole year. He got us presents and stuff. He was very upset about leaving, but it was the best for him and his family. The saddest part was that he didn't even go to another regional area; he left for a metropolitan area.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Has that been the experience with other teachers in your school, where they perhaps come for one or two years and then soon move back to a metropolitan area or other towns closer to the coast?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** Yes, it's quite a common occurrence. We see a lot of teachers come out for that initial experience and that big boost of money that you get from the financial incentives, and then they realise what it's like to teach out in regional areas and a lot of them cannot handle it because they were not properly trained or supported because of how the schools are run in regional areas. It's not only regional areas where it happens, but it's very highly prevalent there. It is quite often early-careers teachers that will leave. We'll keep them for one or two years and then they'll go back to a metropolitan area. Luckily, recently we have had a few teachers that grew up in regional areas, so they understand what it's like. So those are the teachers who are more likely to stay, which is great. But, yes, it is quite often that the newer teachers will come for one or two years and then go. I haven't seen a lot of mid-career teachers move out. We've had a couple, but they often come out for the higher paying jobs like head teacher or a principal role or something like that—so not the ground-level teachers that we do really need.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is it fair to say that most of the teachers at your school are very early in their career and there's not a great depth of experienced teachers in the school?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** I would say for every faculty they would have about a 50-50 split between experienced and non-experienced teachers, and due to the high turnover rate that's always the case. Whether an experienced teacher leaves or not, or a new teacher leaves, there just always seems to be a 50-50 split between them. That's probably in every single faculty at our school. I would say it's a large split and I would also say that the experienced ones are the ones getting those higher level jobs that keep them away from teaching the students because of the admin tasks they have to do and things like that. So the highest prevalence of teachers teaching students is early-careers teachers who are still finding their feet and need to be mentored and things like that. And due to how hard it is in a regional area, they are leaving and there is a massive turnover rate.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I want to ask you about one of the proposals the department has in its Teacher Supply Strategy, which is this idea of growing your own teachers, and I know in your submission you talk about the admission criteria for teaching and that issue. Can you perhaps give us your views around that particular idea and whether you think that's a viable solution in terms of trying to find locals in Broken Hill who want to take up teaching and who are going to be less likely to end up leaving the area and moving to other schools, other locations?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** Yes, I believe with things such as school-based traineeships and similar types of programs, I think teaching should be a staple and available for those programs because I believe that—and I think the statistics show—teachers aren't leaving because they struggle to teach the content of the subject; they're leaving because they can't handle classroom behaviour or the resources are tough and things like that and the experience in a regional area is really hard. So I believe if students were put into that environment and they could learn how it is and those programs were focused on how to be a teacher, and not on the content you were teaching, I think it would help and it would get them that experience and they wouldn't be walking into a teaching job after a uni degree with no experience. I think we would find that it would retain teachers a lot better and we'd probably have more teachers recruited because they wouldn't be scared of going into a teaching degree because of the unknown. PSATs are great—it gets people into nursing and other trades. I think it's a great pathway that a lot of students take and it does help them choose a uni degree. I do think that teaching should be available in a similar program that's viable. Yes, I believe it will help with retaining and recruitment.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you very much for coming along, Mr Quintrell, and giving us your experience. I just wanted to ask you, when you talk with your friends and people in your grade and at your school, what is the impact of having seen teacher shortages and the stress of teachers on students' willingness to go into teaching themselves?

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**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Good question.

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** I think there's a massive impact. I know that I would not want to be a teacher based on what I've seen. I don't believe that I would be able to deal with the lack of resources because if I was going to be a teacher I would be going out to a regional area, but I don't think I could do that, and I think that's the consensus with a lot of students—they see how hard it is for teachers. At my school we've seen teachers cry, teachers have had to leave our classrooms because they have had mental breakdowns halfway through the class and we've had the head teacher in to come and take the rest of the class because the teachers can't handle the environment.

I think things like that push students away, and it's usually the inexperienced teachers in their first few years who are still trying to find their feet and are struggling a lot and they're not being supported correctly. It's those hardships that stop a lot of young people. I can probably think of three people in my entire year who want to take up teaching, and there are a few of those who want to go to a South Australian uni, so they may not be coming back to New South Wales. Yes, there's a large consensus of people who don't want to be teachers based off what they see from the teachers at their school. I think that's the same with many degrees. If you go to a doctor and you have a bad experience with a doctor, you probably don't want to be a doctor. I think that's how it works. Young people are very impressionable and right now the impression from a lot of teachers is that teaching is hard.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** We have heard in a previous hearing that there are a lot of cases where a specialist teacher is off for whatever reason and cannot be replaced by another specialist teacher. What is the impact, particularly in your HSC years, when, for example, a science teacher isn't available and a teacher without that qualification has to take over? How often does it happen and what's the impact?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** I would say I've been quite lucky with the HSC year. I haven't had too many experiences without a teacher, but I can recall one experience in PE. My PE teacher got COVID, so they could not enter the school, and we did not have a teacher for that entire week she was away. Every single PE class we were on minimal supervision, if any supervision at all. We were given PowerPoints or textbook work to do, and it's proven by statistics that that's not the most effective way to learn. Individual learning is nowhere near as effective as having a teacher in front of you explaining the content, especially considering each student learns differently. So it has massive effects on academic achievement, especially for HSC students, because a lot of the content is a lot more advanced, and it's crucial content. You can't miss something in the HSC; it's all very important.

You can kind of get away with it in the junior years, missing something, because it's easy to catch up on, but in the HSC you've got such a strict time schedule that if you miss a whole week of learning because you don't have the teacher and you can't get through the work as effectively, you're behind. I know in PE we had about two weeks of revision in total before our trials when we were supposed to have, based on the schedule, around four. That's also due to sporting carnivals and other things getting in the way, but a lot of it was missing out on those lessons with the teacher because when they came back, we would then have to catch up on the work we missed, taking away time. So it has a massive impact on the timing of teaching and the motivation of students and a lot of things.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Campbell, thank you so much for travelling all this way and coming to Parliament to share your experiences. I think it's extremely important to hear your voice, as well as the other voices that we'll hear during this inquiry. I just wanted to ask you—I know you're a member of the Regional Youth Taskforce, and it's made up of a number of young people from across New South Wales. Do you think you could provide perhaps some of the discussions and some of the deliberations and solutions that not only you but some of the other young people from that group may have considered? I think, as somebody who is at the coalface, it's obviously something that will have been discussed and you or your colleagues—your fellow students—might be able to provide us some insights. You've got a perspective from Broken Hill, but it may be different to ones that are from across regional New South Wales. Are you able to provide us some of those insights to us?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** Yes, of course. Every young person's experience at school is different. Every school goes through different challenges. With education, it's been a topic at every single one of our meetings. Whether it's directly in our schedule or whether it's just conversations on the side, it always gets spoken about. We had Sarah Mitchell at our second meeting, so we had an intense conversation about teacher shortages and the policies that are in place and things like that. I think a lot of the conversations we've had have been comparisons to boarding schools. Some of the young people on the task force go to boarding schools and they talk about the difference between their primary schools or their other high schools that they went to in their regional area and the boarding school, and how some of the programs can be brought over from boarding schools into rural schools and how it could help them run more efficiently.

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There is always that comment that obviously the boarding schools have better resources and higher amounts of teachers. They're just better off in general due to the funding and area resources. I think the overarching consensus is there is a large issue with education in general, whether it's teacher shortages, academic student engagement—all those types of things. They're always spoken about. There's a lot of talk about wellbeing in schools. We have large chats about education all the time. There are always solutions coming out and then we debate the solution. It's really good that we had Sarah Mitchell there because I got to give her some research that I've done, and we've continued on having conversations. It's going really well.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Excellent. I know there's only a little bit of time left, so if other Committee members want to ask a question, I will cede my time. Again, I want to thank you, Campbell, for travelling all this way and providing a regional and youth perspective because it's really important to us.

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

**The CHAIR:** Finally, Campbell, does your school have a student absenteeism problem? What would you estimate to be the attendance rate? I just tried to find your annual report on the website, but it doesn't appear to be there.

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** I believe that our school has, obviously, not the best attendance rate it could be, but it's definitely not the worst. I think we have a high amount of students that are coming to school. There are obviously, as with every school, students that do not want to come for various reasons. But I think at our school I feel like it would be an average attendance rate in comparison to other schools.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, because it's sort of the flip side. We're inquiring into teacher shortages, but if there's only a relatively small number of students at the school, then it's a bit skew-whiff as to what teacher shortages might mean in practice. For instance—you're from western New South Wales—when I visited Walgett and Bourke high schools, because of absenteeism there was a teacher for every two students there that day. So the crisis in those schools was about attendance, not teacher shortages. Do you think that's common in western New South Wales, that teacher shortages perhaps are relative to student attendance? At high-attendance schools, of course, these shortages are critical, but we've also got to address absenteeism in some schools to make sure we've not only got teachers there but we've also got students.

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** I would argue that teacher shortages do play some role in student absenteeism. I believe if a school has a teacher shortage and the environment is not welcoming for students, they are less likely to come to school. So if you, in turn, solve the teacher shortage issue, you will help the absentee issue in schools across New South Wales. I believe that our school does have a higher rate of attendance, and there is a teacher shortage issue. If attendance is dropping, I would argue that the low amounts of teachers or the low amount of quality teachers is affecting the attendance of students.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thanks very much, Campbell, for your testimony and for your comprehensive list of recommendations. I think that's excellent. I really commend you on how you presented your submission and how you presented today. Thank you so much. It's been really helpful for us.

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** Thank you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I have one question for you. I have a couple, but I think we'll only had time for one. You said that you often get new teachers or teachers who have recently graduated from university. What's your experience as a student in terms of how equipped they are to teach you their understanding of the content that they're teaching you but also just the way they can respond in the classroom?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** I don't think that early-career teachers and teachers that are new to the profession have a problem with teaching the content. More often than not, they will be teaching content that they are passionate about. At school, students that love history will most likely become a history teacher. So I don't think there is a problem with teaching the content. I've never had an issue understanding a teacher when they're teaching content to me. It's more about how they teach the content or how they manage the classroom, and that comes down to other issues with the amount of time they're allocated for planning.

I often come to unstructured classes. There are classes where I'm just chucked a textbook. This happened more often in my junior years so the teacher could have time to plan for their senior students. So they would give the junior years a textbook and a couple of questions while they would use the class time to prepare for their senior lessons so that those students could get the best education they could, because prioritising them is more important. So there are issues around the admin side of planning. But it's not so much their ability to teach the content; it's their ability to prepare to teach the content. I think they understand the content and the concepts. I just think how they teach it and how they're allocated time to prepare for it is the main issue.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I saw you talked a lot about the workload in your submission—

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**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —and I really appreciate that. Even just in your comments then you talk about prioritising. Of course it's important to prioritise, but those building blocks that you're learning in those junior school years are what's going to set you up for your senior years, isn't that correct?

**CAMPBELL QUINTRELL:** Exactly. It does create a lot of gaps when teachers have to use class time to prepare for other classes. That's when you start seeing academic achievements drop through the years.

**The CHAIR:** Any other questions? Mr Farlow, Ms Fang, Ms Boyd and Mr D'Adam, any final questions? If not, we thank Ms Robinson and Campbell Quintrell for their attendance today. It's been a big effort and very impressive, what you've had to say, coming all the way from Broken Hill. We really do value your contribution.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**



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**Ms LEANNE NIXON**, Deputy Secretary, School Performance North, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Mr CHRIS LAMB**, Chief People Officer, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Mr MURAT DIZDAR**, Deputy Secretary, School Performance South, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** We now welcome witnesses from the Department of Education: Chris Lamb, the chief people officer; our old mate, Murat Dizdar, Deputy Secretary, School Performance South, who is a veteran of these hearings; and Leanne Nixon, School Performance North. You have all been here before, but not for this inquiry. Mr Lamb, you're sitting in the middle, which is normally the driver's seat, so would you like to make an opening statement on behalf of the department, please?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I would, Chair, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we're meeting on today and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Education systems across Australia and abroad are grappling with the challenges of increased student enrolments, declining numbers of graduate teachers and subject diversity demands. As the largest employer of teachers in Australia, the department has a workforce of more than 92,000 teachers. Over the past five years we've permanently filled, on average, more than 6,000 teaching roles each year.

But the national challenge is real and New South Wales is no different. It has and will continue to be a key priority for the department to increase the supply of teachers across our system. As outlined in our submission, the Department of Education's modelling indicates we have enough teachers to meet projected demand until at least 2025 but it also indicates, as we've discussed before, some specific pressure points in the system. For instance, supply is more constrained for certain subjects, like mathematics, and in some regional and rural locations, like we heard from Mr Quintrell. In some parts of the State, supply issues have been further exacerbated by the recent and unprecedented effects of catastrophic drought, fire and flooding, and this year in particular, influenza and other illnesses are circulating at high numbers throughout communities and schools.

As outlined recently by the Federal Government, COVID-19 has compounded teacher shortages, creating an unprecedented challenge for the sector as well as in the wider community. I would really like for the Committee to put the COVID absences in New South Wales schools in some perspective. In the first half of 2022, we've had 27,000 teachers advise us they had tested positive for COVID. As you know, each time someone tests positive for COVID, that means that they're required to take at least five days off work. In addition, many teachers took leave to care for a family member who may have had COVID and, in addition to that, there was significant sick leave because of the bad influenza season. To get a sense of the scale of this impact, teacher sick leave to June this year was 38 per cent higher than the same period last year and 60 per cent higher than the last pre-COVID year.

Absences at these levels are just unprecedented. Similar absences are being felt across the economy in every workforce—education or otherwise—and we've heard from teachers on the ground that they have been struggling through this pandemic, and that is real. COVID absences, this year in particular, have created an extraordinary burden on our system and on every teacher and student. We appreciate that the lived experience of teacher shortages caused by COVID and other illnesses has been exceptionally difficult, especially this year. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our teachers for their incredible work and dedication in the face of this incredible challenge.

Let me take just a couple of moments to outline a range of actions we've taken to help alleviate the immediate burden placed on teachers. We've been focused on supporting schools with our staff working to bring experienced teachers back into the casual teaching workforce and supporting the rapid accreditation of graduate teachers. As of 5 September, over 4,200 accredited final-year university students have been granted interim approval to teach, meaning they are immediately available for casual or temporary employment. We've made some of the department's non-school-based teaching service and corporate staff who are accredited to teach available to meet higher backfilled demand in schools and we've piloted a priority recruitment system in terms 2 and 3 this year to provide intensive recruitment support for 56 schools, filling over 146 permanent vacancies to August.

But it's important to separate the immediate issues from the long-term structural issues. COVID aside, while we do have an adequate teacher supply to 2025 and modelling does show that beyond that secondary teacher demand may be difficult to meet without targeted intervention, more money overall into all parts of the education system has driven up demand for teachers alongside enrolment growth. Our modelling factors in the historical increases in funding in schools, and we are working to improve visibility and therefore the capacity of the model to assess demand impacts of new programs and initiatives earlier in their establishment. Now, we model teachers

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for demand in the public system and supply teachers into the public system as we hold more complete data on the drivers of supply and demand and the underlying behaviours for the cohort of teachers. But clearly with one-third of students outside the public system, the decisions in other sectors and schools do have an impact.

There are a number of improvements concerning data collection and consistency that will drive increased confidence in the supply and demand forecast scenarios and that is why New South Wales has been leading the work on data following the national teacher supply round table. These improvements are attempting to solve inconsistent definitions on terms impacting what is actually collected; datasets with differing baselines and timing mean it's difficult to compare and correlate content; differing levels of granularity with collected data; and completeness of data across our schools and school types. Now, in terms of current priorities, competition across the global workforce for STEM skills is of course driving a shortage of specialist teachers and the longstanding difficulty of attracting teachers to some rural and remote schools does remain a challenge, despite a range of teacher attraction measures. The permanent teacher vacancy rate, in our submission, reflects high total teacher retention rates as well as the recent uplift in funding for permanent teachers.

Through recruitment and targeted action, already the New South Wales public school teaching workforce has been expanded by an additional 3,748 equivalent teachers, or FTE, since 2019. I'm pleased to report so far this year we've had 3,268 first-time permanent teachers commence, which is already 364 more first-time permanent teachers than in the whole of 2021. But it's clear that even more targeted measures across the teacher life cycle, from the mentoring and support that early career teachers and teaching students need through to the career opportunities and financial rewards that experienced teachers are seeking, are required. We need targeted intervention and that's why the department developed the Teacher Supply Strategy, which was launched in 2021. As we've discussed with the Committee before, it's a long-term strategy to counter a long-term issue. It sits alongside the immediate actions I outlined a few moments ago and represents an integrated approach to addressing the teacher supply challenges we're facing.

It is a 10-year plan and we are in year one of implementing that 10-year plan. Its target is to increase the net permanent teacher workforce by 3,700 teachers over the next 10 years. Initiatives are progressing well, with significant design and early implementation underway. The initiatives and their impact on teacher supply will be phased over the 10-year life span of the strategy because, as we know, it takes time to grow teachers. While we have had some challenges recruiting teachers from interstate and overseas, we're pleased with how our New South Wales-based initiatives are tracking. The initiatives will build on our regular initiatives, such as partnering with universities to boost teacher supply, which has already resulted in record numbers of teachers appointed to the New South Wales public school system. This is an evidence-based strategic plan to align teacher supply to projected demand through 2022.

Just finally on the national approach, we're very pleased to see that the New South Wales strategy is now the backbone of national policy discussions around the teacher workforce. It reinforces that we're focused on the right things. Of course, we'll continue to work with our State, Territory and Commonwealth colleagues to address the teacher supply issues that all Australian jurisdictions—and indeed jurisdictions the world over—are facing. We welcome the opportunity to explore recommendations and new initiatives that might come out of the national forum, as well as those from this inquiry, because we are absolutely committed to addressing teacher supply issues. Thank you.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Thank you for your attendance today. In your submission and in your opening statement you made the comment that you believe that the supply is adequate to meet projected demand until 2025. That's correct, isn't it?

**CHRIS LAMB:** With the exception of some subject-specific areas, such as STEM, and in regional and remote locations, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Sorry, so is it your submission that there's not a problem—that actually it's all in hand—or that there is a problem and we need to take action?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I wouldn't want the Committee to think for one moment that we don't believe that addressing teacher shortages is an important issue. We absolutely do. What we're saying is that our modelling projects that outside of some subject-specific areas and some rural and remote locations, between now and 2025 we actually have a good supply of teachers. But this is a 10-year strategy and what we're focusing on is the teacher supply and demand issues between now and 2032.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Okay. Can I just ask about the modelling. Is that being done within the department or is that commissioned work?

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**CORRECTED**

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**CHRIS LAMB:** The modelling has been done within the department. There is also national modelling that has been done and various other organisations have prepared their own modelling, but we have done our own modelling, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Have you got your submission in front of you?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I do, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I take you to page 1 of the data attachment that was provided. There's a table on page 1.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Just let me find the attachments. Sorry, my attachments don't have page numbers on them.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The data attachment is on the first page, headed "Teacher Demand and Supply". Table 1.1 is "Forecast teacher demand and supply, all schools, incorporating Teacher Supply Strategy Initiatives".

**CHRIS LAMB:** Yes, I have it.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The first question I have for you is the demand-side numbers for 2021 and 2022 are known, aren't they? That's the known number. That's the full-time equivalent number of teachers in the system, isn't it? That's 70,368.

**CHRIS LAMB:** The demand reflects what we do know today about the school enrolments, subject choices et cetera. That's on the demand side, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That is the number, isn't it? That's the number of full-time equivalent teachers in the New South Wales department's employ, isn't it?

**CHRIS LAMB:** No. That is a demand number. So that says based on the enrolments that we have and based on the subject splits that we have et cetera, that is the demand for teachers.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can you explain what that means? Is it the number of teachers that we need? Is that what you're saying?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I'm saying that it is the baseline number of teachers that we would need in the system, based on the enrolments that we have, the subject splits that we have et cetera.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But it's the 2021 and 2022 numbers, so either we've got enough teachers for this year, 2022—that number is the number of teachers that we currently have, and we say that meets the demand. Is that a fair assessment of what you're telling us through this graph?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I think what you've got to take into account is the demand is a baseline number, based on—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** No, I'm asking about now—today, 2022. The number there is 70,368. That's roughly equivalent—I'll just find the relevant section because I think it's repeated somewhere else.

**The CHAIR:** Mr D'Adam, for the benefit of the other Committee members, including me, whereabouts is this table? You said it was on an un-numbered page.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It's in the amended submission that was provided by the department. There's a data attachment. It's on page 1 and it's Table 1.1. That number is the number of teachers that we have at the moment.

**CHRIS LAMB:** I might ask Mr Dizdar to explain that a bit more clearly.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Mr D'Adam, we make that clear in the paper that student enrolments is the main identified driver, so we take the total enrolments in the system. We also take what the staffing formula is at the time, and we assume that that staffing formula does not alter. That staffing formula goes to the teacher allocation on class size. Class size varies from kindergarten through to year 12. So that number that you're referring to of 70,108 in 2021 would be the number based on student enrolments, staffing formula, class size policy—none of that altering.

**CHRIS LAMB:** It is also based on a perfect scenario of every class size being exactly matched in every school to the number of teachers. Clearly we don't operate in a perfect system, so there needs to be some flexibility built into the system to allow for that.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Let me just try to bring this together. On page 13 of your submission, you talk about the vaccination status of teaching staff. You've got a total there of 78,535 teaching staff, in terms of the total number "fully vaccinated" and the other categories. So 78,535 is the number of teaching staff in March 2022 that the department had.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Where have you got that, Mr D'Adam?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** This is at page 13.

**CHRIS LAMB:** My page 13 does not have those numbers on it.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It's Table 7.3 in the submission.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Are you in the appendices, Mr D'Adam, or back in the main—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes, the appendix—the data attachment that was an appendix to the amended submission.

**CHRIS LAMB:** I have that now.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** In that Table 7.3, you're telling us that you've got 78,535 teachers, but you're projecting a demand for 2022 of 70,000. So that figure is already wrong, isn't it?

**CHRIS LAMB:** You're talking about a modelling number—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Do you have more teachers than you need or do you have less teachers?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Let him answer.

**CHRIS LAMB:** You're talking about a modelling number in a perfect scenario versus the number of actual teachers. They're not the same datasets. You're talking about two different things.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What does the model tell us if in the year that we're actually in the projection is 70,000 and that figure is not reflected in the actual number of teachers the department has?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Mr D'Adam—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Surely that raises questions about the accuracy of the model, doesn't it?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** This information will help. Why that table has 78,000—like Mr Lamb was saying, that goes to the actual teachers in the system, because a school has two buckets of employment: one, the number of students at that school and the system, using the staffing formula and the class size policy to allocate FTE—full-time equivalent staff—on that number.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I get it; I understand.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Then, as you know, Mr D'Adam, with the school budget allocation report, with the ninth year of additionality of funding for the equity loadings, low-level adjustment for disability—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You're going to need more teachers, aren't you?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** —low SES, EAL/D, what happens with that additionality of funding is schools hire additional staff. So this number differs from that first number you were describing because it goes to the actual numbers of teachers in our schools, which is both an allocation and schools employing additional staff. The first number you referred to is the system allocation number.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Here's the problem with the model, isn't it? If the model is premised on FTE, which it clearly appears to be, and you actually need—you've got 78,000 there but, in fact, in terms of headcount, if you turn to Table 8.1, you actually had a headcount of 92,674 teachers in 2021 versus a model that says you need 70,000. You actually need 92,000 actual teachers, not FTE but actual teachers. Isn't that correct?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I see where you're trying to draw those parallels, Mr D'Adam, but a full-time equivalent number will always in any organisation in any system be different to a headcount number.

**The CHAIR:** It will be lower.

**CHRIS LAMB:** They don't equate because—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I understand how FTE works.

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**CORRECTED**

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**CHRIS LAMB:** No, please let me finish, because what you're trying to do is suggest that you probably need 20,000 more if the headcount is 92,000. But in any school at any time circumstances can change, and you have more people working part-time or more people working full-time or that mix in your workforce. So doing a model based on FTE is the most accurate way to do that. That might be staffed in a perfect world by the exact number of people in the model who are all working full-time or it might be staffed with twice that many people who are all working half the number of hours or something in between. That's the way it's staffed.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Where I'm headed here is actually I disagree with you. The FTE is the wrong way to set up the model because you don't know full-time equivalent, you need actual people. I want to also raise the issue around the supply number that you've provided. The supply number is based on commencements and completions. That's correct, isn't it?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Which page are you referring to here, Mr D'Adam?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** On that first page, just above the table 1.1, you say:

Future ITE completions may not reflect a historical average. As the model is rolled forward, T+4 reflects the latest actual ITE commencement and completion rates.

That's actual people completing initial teacher education.

**CHRIS LAMB:** It's projected, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Presumably not for 2021. You actually know how many completed.

**CHRIS LAMB:** For 2021 we do.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** And for 2022?

**CHRIS LAMB:** But the page you're talking to covers to 2026.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So you're talking about actual people, not FTEs, actual people completing degrees. That's right, isn't it?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Indeed, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So if you're projecting that you're relying on actual completions, how does that work when a significant proportion of those completions won't go into the New South Wales Department of Education, they'll go into other sectors? That number is already going to be chopped down substantially because you're going to lose a proportion of those to other sectors. Why isn't that reflected in the model?

**CHRIS LAMB:** That is factored into the model. We don't for one moment presume that every teacher who graduates from a teaching degree in New South Wales is going to enter the public system.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So that 85,000, that's unexplained in the information that's provided in the table.

**CHRIS LAMB:** If there are specific questions you have, I'm very happy to explain them in more detail on notice. But it is a model. I think the difference between full-time employment and headcount is really important because if you've got a job open that's one FTE, you might fill that with one person or you might fill that with two people. The two people might work the same number of hours each. It might be split 0.7/0.3. You can't make that assumption before you actually get into the recruitment process. So the only way we can model— as in, what's the core requirement going to be?—is FTE. Of course, when it gets into recruitment, the reality is that that might be filled by one person or two people in a mix. But you've got to understand the FTE requirement because you don't know how each role is going to be filled.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Surely, Mr Lamb, you can model because you've got historical data in terms of how many actual teachers you needed in the system. You can project that while you might have an FTE at one number, the actual number of headcount will have some relationship, and so you should be able to model that.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Yes. You will find that all of those considerations are reflected in the model. As I said, I am very happy to explain how the modelling works in more detail for you, if that's helpful.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** All right. If you're saying that the numbers in terms of supply take into account the proportionate take of the Department of Education versus other sectors, what is the total supply number then?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I don't have that in front of me.

**The CHAIR:** What's the base year for the model?

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**CORRECTED**

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**CHRIS LAMB:** Again—

**The CHAIR:** I'm assuming it's 2020, is it?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I am happy to check that for you on notice. But my understanding is it's the year before this table starts.

**The CHAIR:** So 2020.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Nixon or Mr Dizdar, is it not the aspiration of the department to have a qualified teacher in front of every class all the time?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, it is.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is it fair to say then that when that doesn't occur, that's a problem? If that's your aspiration, to have a qualified teacher in front of every class all the time, is it not a problem if that's not achieved?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Not only is it an aspiration, having a qualified teacher in front of every class is the only way that teaching and learning can occur in a class.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Exactly.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** You need a qualified teacher.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So it is a problem, isn't it?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We have said to this Committee budget estimates when we've been asked about merged and minimal supervision that they're not optimal circumstances. The optimal circumstance is to have the classroom teacher—like we just heard from our young person here in Campbell Quintrell—for continuity of teaching and learning the optimal is to have the teacher in front of the class. That's not feasible or possible on every occasion. There will be sick leave—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But you concede that when it doesn't happen, that's a problem?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Let me answer. You'll have the teacher, full-time equivalent, allocated to the school. There will be instances where the teacher is ill and cannot attend. That's not ideal.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking whether you concede that it is a problem if you don't achieve that aspiration? Whether there are reasons why it hasn't happened—I can fully understand that there are circumstances that arise in a mass system where this is not going to be achieved.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Let me finish.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But where it doesn't happen, that's a problem, isn't it?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** In in a situation like that, the school looks for casual or temporary cover for that class. That's a qualified teacher who goes in front of that class.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Sometimes.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's a qualified teacher who goes in front of that class. That's not the class teacher. It's not ideal. From a student perspective, it is always ideal to have your allocated teacher for continuity of teaching and learning, but it's not feasible or possible outside of COVID or within COVID. The impacts of COVID, as Mr Lamb indicated in his submission, have been quite profound. We have had upwards of 60 per cent higher absenteeism in the workforce inside the school gates. Of course that's going to have an impact.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You would accept that prior to COVID there were collapsed classes, merged classes and minimal supervision that occurred in the system before COVID. Yes?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes. I've said this to the Committee before. On merged classes, please do not jump to the presumption that it's not ideal teaching and learning. You can have a merged class where two year 11 economics teachers, timetabled at the same time and present on duty, put their class together. Because you might have one teacher who's inexperienced and one teacher who's experienced to lead that class.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But, Mr Dizdar, you don't know whether that's the case or whether it is the case that you actually don't have enough teachers, because you're not even collecting the data, are you?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Well, let me finish and I'm happy to come to that as well. Please don't jump to the presumption that merged class does not mean that optimal continuity of teaching and learning doesn't happen.

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**CORRECTED**

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Sometimes that merged class is needed because of staff absenteeism, because of sick leave, because another staff member is on an excursion or an activity, or because the school has been unable to source a casual at the last minute. It can happen. It is not ideal but it is still a qualified teacher in front of that combined class delivering continuity of teaching and learning. What's not optimal is minimal supervision. That is a last resort, in our experience, for schools where a school cannot source a casual or temporary teacher for a class or classes and provides self-directed learning, maintains their duty of care by supervision but it's not teacher-directed learning. It's not ideal. I think it's important to distinguish—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But, Mr Dizdar, you're not answering my question. We have limited time.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I think it's really—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I would like to draw you to my question, which is you don't know—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** These are not simple things. Sometimes they're misconstrued, and that's why the detail here is important.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We have taken the detail, and I understand what you're saying about a junior teacher, or a less experienced teacher, and a more experienced teacher. But you don't know the extent of what is occurring, do you, because you can't even collect the data?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We have said in estimates just recently that we have never centrally held that data or made it a requirement for schools to maintain that data. This goes to the operation of the school. It goes back to when I was a principal in the system. It wasn't asked of me. Principals and their teams concentrate on the running of their school. This is not a data point that they want to be tied up in trying to collect, and nor does the system indicate that they collect it centrally. The Minister made it clear that she won't be asking for that data to be put to central.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I draw you back, Mr Dizdar? If it is our aspiration to have a qualified teacher in front of every class and you're not actually achieving that, surely you would concede that the department has an interest in knowing where and when this is happening and at what frequency? Surely you must want to know that, if you want to meet your aspiration to have a classroom that is covered by a qualified teacher all the time?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I don't quite concur with your premise. I concur that it's both an aspiration and a requirement to have a qualified teacher in front of the classroom. That's the mandatory requirement. Where I don't concur is that there will be operational requirements and reasons each and every day, in or outside of COVID, where that will not be feasible or possible. I want to give credit to schools and their leadership teams. They source casuals, use our casual direct system, share amongst schools, use the additional staff that they may have to come off programs for a short period of time to provide a qualified person in front of a classroom. Where we work really hard is the system—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Don't you want to know, Mr Dizdar—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Where we work really hard as a system through our school workforce recruitment teams is to help schools make sure they have got their FTE staff where they have got large numbers of vacancies—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It is not a priority; that's what you are telling us?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It is a priority to help those schools to fill those positions. It is a priority to make casual staff available to schools. It is a priority, and we have, with casual supplementation across pockets that are hard to find casual staff—made that available and supported our schools. What is not a priority is to collect that data, because the operational requirements are more important to our schools and to the system.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How bad does it have to get before you intervene at a central level? How do you know when it is bad in a particular area or in a particular principal network or a particular school? How do you know when it is getting to a state where it is unacceptable?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Well, several mechanisms. One, I want to call out the strong working relationships principals have with their Directors, Educational Leadership and through them back with the school workforce team. The school workforce team can see the vacancy data and they work assiduously to fill every single vacancy across the State. If schools are struggling on the casual front, they have already reached out and connected with us. And that's why the Minister committed to a casual supplementation program across the State: to have pools of casuals in hard-to-staff, hard-to-find casual teacher locations, to support. I mean, it is not a blind exercise. There is a data exercise at school workforce and then there is the working relationship between director and principal so that we can support on the ground.

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I also want to ask you about data, but it is slightly different data. Does the department track teachers' complaints about being bullied or abused, whether it is by other teachers or students or parents or anyone else?

**CHRIS LAMB:** We do track that sort of information. I don't have any of that with me today, but if you have specific questions about that, then I would be happy to provide that on notice.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes. If you could, that could be very useful. It would be interesting to see the breakdown of the numbers of those complaints—and over time, so let's go back five years. That would be very useful.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Okay. If I could just ask, in a supplementary question or whatever, that you just be a little bit more specific about what it is that you need, and then we would be happy to provide that for you.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay, happy to do it. What procedures are in place when teachers complain? Is it a sort of school-by-school process?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Again, it would depend on the situation and where the complaint comes from and whether it is something that needed to involve police or that sort of thing. It is a bit hard to give a generic answer to that.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Let's talk about something that doesn't involve police. We have a hypothetical complaint from a teacher that they are being subjected to, for example, antisemitic bullying from a student. What is the procedure for them to go through?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Mr Dizdar, would you like to comment on that, or should we take that on notice?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No, I can help Ms Boyd. We'd expect our principal, who is the site manager leader and manager of the school—we would expect our staff member to make them aware of the matter and the complaint in the first instance. If it was a situation where the staff member may have reasons why they didn't want to do that, then the Director, Educational Leadership would be the next layer for them to refer the complaint and matter to. And then it would be—whether it was the principal or the Director, Educational Leadership, to then manage the complaint. If the principal or the director requires assistance and support in managing that complaint, they could reach out to our professional ethical standards for support around how to go about that, or they could reach into our line management structure and school performance.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Would it ever be a response, in managing that complaint, for a teacher to be moved to a different school rather than for the actual bullying to be dealt with?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Ms Boyd, it is a little difficult. I don't mean to be cute around it, but when you are dealing with a hypothetical, it is a little difficult. What we would expect is a thorough assessment of the complaint by way of interviewing the teacher, interviewing the—I think you said it was a student in this case, and the family. There could be other relevant parties involved; I'm not sure. But you want a thorough assessment. It is always important to treat it as allegations at that stage until we can substantiate those or not.

If it were to be substantiated, Ms Boyd, we would need to do the best to support our teacher as well as educate the young person who was involved in that matter. I don't want to be pre-emptive of what an outcome may look like because it would vary from circumstance to circumstance. It might involve a mediation or conciliation. It might involve extra layers of support for the young person or the teacher. It could lead to a variety of outcomes. If you have got a specific case you want us to look at, we would be happy to take it offline and deal with it in a confidential manner.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes, understood. Does the department do any kind of exit interviews with teachers who are leaving the profession to find out what their motivations are for leaving?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It is a really great question. Our first front line is again our principal and our school and the leadership team. It is my working experience that a principal who is confronted with a staff member resigning, leaving the entire public education system, would want to meet with them and find out why. It could be a variety—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That is a really misleading sort of answer. The question was about if you conduct exit interviews and you talked about a hypothetical. It is a pretty straightforward question, Mr Dizdar. Do you, as a system, do exit interviews: yes or no?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** First of all, I don't concur that I'm misleading at all. I was saying if a staff member is leaving a school, resigning from the system—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Some principals may; some principals may not.



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**CORRECTED**

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** It would be my experience that the principal would want to meet and discuss that with that staff member. Yes, that's an exit interview conducted by the principal.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** But is what you are saying that there is not a requirement for that?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It doesn't happen centrally from the system, is what I'm saying. It is something you'd leave at a school level.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** It is not required of the school by the department, and the department also doesn't then collect that data.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We certainly don't do those centrally—the exit interviews that you are referring. We leave that down to the local level.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** How, then, can you get a proper understanding of why people might be leaving the profession?

**The CHAIR:** Did you just say you don't collect the exit data information centrally?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No, we don't, and we don't conduct it ourselves.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You don't even know whether interviews are held.

**The CHAIR:** Isn't that negligent of a major employer in New South Wales, that you've got no central database on why people are leaving the system? I would have thought that's a normal and intelligent starting point for dealing with possible teacher shortages. Why wouldn't you collect it?

**CHRIS LAMB:** In many organisations that implement exit interview processes, they do so when they identify that they have an issue around increased staff turnover. We actually have an extremely low staff resignation rate: well below 3 per cent. Many organisations would experience a resignation rate of 10 per cent or more. It is not a data set that is telling us, as a department, that we have a particular issue that we need to address. Therefore, the decision, as Mr Dizdar said, has been to leave that at a school level rather than implement some kind of centrally managed administrative process to report on it.

**The CHAIR:** You have submitted data here that the resignation rate of teachers in their first five years of teaching in 2021 was 11.6 per cent. Wouldn't you want to know, for that cohort? These are new teachers, people who have dedicated themselves out of school to doing initial teacher education, and more than one in 10 are leaving within their first five years. Wouldn't you want to know why?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Certainly, the resignation rate in the first five years is higher than we would like it to be.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And increasing.

**CHRIS LAMB:** And, as Mr Dizdar said, that is information that the schools manage and collect. I take the suggestion that it could be a good idea to look at that centrally. That is something we would certainly be willing to consider. Sorry, just one final question. You could imagine that there could be certain schools that wouldn't want to collect that data because that data may not make their school look good. Given the pressures that a lot of principals are already under, there could be real incentive for them not to share that information with you. Has that not been a risk that the department has thought was worth managing?

**CHRIS LAMB:** As Mr Dizdar said, it is a risk that we manage, but we manage it at the local level.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** It doesn't sound like you are managing it if you are not taking into account the incentives and the pressures that schools are under that might cause them to not willingly give you that information.

**CHRIS LAMB:** I think to address that a bit further, Ms Boyd, in a system that has a very low resignation rate, first of all you've got to put the appropriate controls in place to deal with the issues that you are having. But second, as Mr Dizdar inferred, the principals and the DELs and the management structure in the organisation work very closely with the schools. I would be very confident that if a particular school, a particular principal had an issue with staff leaving—leaving the whole system, not just leaving the school—then the director of educational leadership would understand that issue and would already be talking to the principal about that issue, regardless of whether the principal wanted to share a piece of data or whatever. The DEL would know that. The DEL would see the recruitment that is going on and the activity that is happening.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Given how desperate we are to retain these teachers, even if there was just one teacher who had resigned because, for example, they felt bullied and it wasn't dealt with properly, wouldn't the department want to know?

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**CORRECTED**

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**CHRIS LAMB:** Again, I'm very confident that we have processes in place so that if a staff member feels that they are being bullied they can raise those. If they are not comfortable raising them within the school, they can raise them with their DEL, they can contact our Professional and Ethical Standards group directly, and we have instances where those contacts occur. So I don't think that we are not acknowledging that people need to have a path to raise those issues. I think we are saying that they do have paths to raise those issues, and they do use those paths to raise issues.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Lamb—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sorry, just one last question. It is extraordinary though, isn't it, that you have a situation where we are so concerned about teacher shortages, where we are so concerned about both retention and attraction into teaching, but the department hasn't taken that very basic step of doing exit interviews to find out why people are leaving the profession?

**CHRIS LAMB:** As Mr Dizdar said, it's not that we don't do exit interviews; it's that those conversations are happening at a local level—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** The department doesn't do exit interviews.

**CHRIS LAMB:** —and managing those through the DELs and the management structure. As I said, the most important data I think we have here is that we have an extremely low resignation rate.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You keep saying that, but that's actually not right. That is not right, is it, because a third of your workforce, you don't count them. You don't engage in any kind of measure of the reasons or the basis for their exits?

**The CHAIR:** No, the casuals.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** A third of your workforce.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Well, a casual doesn't—they are not employed in a way that they resign, so there would be no trigger to do an exit interview on those people.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That's right, so you wouldn't know. They might be working in the department for five years as a casual, but you would have no idea if they left or the reasons why—none—and that's a third of your workforce. So how can you say so confidently that you don't have a resignation problem? How can you say that? You can't. A third of your workforce you don't even measure.

**CHRIS LAMB:** I can say that, as every organisation that I have ever worked for does, your attrition rate measures the number of permanent staff who leave the organisation. Casual employees are employed in different ways, in different circumstances, in different reasons. Casual employees—sometimes they are working casually while they are studying, sometimes they're working casually for other reasons. They might finish that study and then go on to permanent employment. Many of our casuals, Mr D'Adam, I think it is important to point out, they leave casual teaching because they become temporary or permanent teachers in our system. So I don't think it is an accurate representation.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Some 27,000 teachers are temporary—27,000. You don't measure them.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Our temporary teaching workforce certainly is higher than we would like. As we talked to the Committee before about in estimates, there are a number of reasons why that is. Sometimes there are circumstances that, under our current staffing agreement, actually don't allow us to fill a role on a permanent basis—when someone is on parental leave, for example, or when someone is on secondment somewhere else.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** We understand there are reasons why—

**The CHAIR:** No, Mr D'Adam, you've had a good go. It is my turn to ask a few questions if you don't mind, but they are along similar lines. Earlier on, Mr Lamb, you essentially blamed COVID for the teacher shortages this year and last. Obviously that is a contributing factor with teachers sick, and there was also a bad flu in the winter just passed. But in normal circumstances, wouldn't you have expected that the reserve army of casual teachers would have stepped up and filled those spots? Where did all the casuals go, to the point where we had these critical teacher shortages?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Chair, with respect, I think we have talked to the Committee about this before. This myth that there was an army of casuals was never accurate. I think we provided the numbers after estimates, in March this year, to explain where those numbers come from. We don't have this army of casuals.

**The CHAIR:** There are 27,000 temps—you just said that.

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**CORRECTED**

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**CHRIS LAMB:** Temporaries are not casuals.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You had 12,000 casuals in 2021.

**The CHAIR:** You had 12,000 casuals.

**CHRIS LAMB:** So 12,000 casuals who work—

**The CHAIR:** Where did they all go? Why didn't those 12,000 step up to fill the gaps?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Many of them did. But, of course, in the last two years many of them have had COVID or many of them have had periods where they perhaps were doing other things.

**The CHAIR:** How many did come in and fill the gaps in schools—of the 12,000?

**CHRIS LAMB:** In what time frame are you talking about, Mr Latham?

**The CHAIR:** The last two years.

**CHRIS LAMB:** I would have to take that on notice and get you the exact number.

**The CHAIR:** You don't know, do you? Isn't this the exact problem with the failure of Sentral data collection not doing it, that you just don't know, and you don't know where they have gone? I put it to you that, most likely, a lot of them left teaching during the lockdowns when they had no work, others looked at the mandates and left and a third reason is that it seems a proportion of them have gone on to be post-COVID tutors—a new department initiative. Aren't they three valid reasons why the reserve army just didn't present and we had the teacher shortages?

**CHRIS LAMB:** We did, of course, have many casuals who did work. We also supplemented those, as I said in my opening statement.

**The CHAIR:** How many? How many casuals worked? You don't know.

**CHRIS LAMB:** I also said in my opening statement the number of additional final-year university students who were granted interim approval to teach. I think that number was over 4,000. We have had more than 500 come back from retirement to work. We have had our non-school-based teaching service work. I think the Committee really needs to understand that 27,000 teachers have told us they had COVID. Each one of them is required to take a minimum of five days' sick leave. Some of them have to take additional leave when they are caring for family members who have COVID, and we had a big flu season. At a baseline number there, that's at least 130,000 sick days. I don't know of any system, in any organisation, in any sector in the world that would not feel an impact when you have that much sick leave.

**The CHAIR:** In years gone by you would have mobilised your 12, 000 casuals to fill most, if not all, of those gaps.

**CHRIS LAMB:** And we did.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Lamb, how can you be a chief people officer without data about your people?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Mr Latham, I have said before, we have a range of data measure measures that we report on.

**The CHAIR:** You don't know how many casuals stepped in to teach.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Clearly we don't report on every aspect of piece of information in the sector.

**The CHAIR:** You don't know why teachers are leaving. You have no Sentral data collection on the exit interviews. Aren't you a product of the cultural hangover of Local Schools, Local Decisions, the most disastrous policy in the history of Western education? Your attitude and that of the department still to this day, after failure after failure after failure, including on workforce—and on Monday we looked at work health and safety at one school; and you articulated it earlier on—is that the principals are there to sort it out with the DELs? What if the principals get it hopelessly wrong, like the one at Castle Hill, on work health and safety? What if the principals get it hopelessly wrong on the learning programs that are needed, and they fail year after year—and we have those schools in New South Wales? What if the principals get it wrong on their own workforce management and they've got a large set of exits out of the system and nobody knows that the principal is the reason why these teachers are leaving?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I think principals are a key leadership role in our system. In any equivalent system, then that level of leadership, in any organisation, in any sector, is an important level of leadership. Those people have to be empowered to make decisions in their school.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** But your blind faith in them—it hurts the system, doesn't it, when principals get it wrong?

**CHRIS LAMB:** We have a range of policies and systems that they need to adhere to. Then we have procedures in place to understand whether or not they're adhering to those systems.

**The CHAIR:** What are those procedures? What were the procedures for exit interviews?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Again, it depends what you're talking about. But, as Mr Dizdar said, they're managed at a school level. I'm very confident that, when you talk to the DELs, they know what the resignation rate is in every one of the schools in their area and they are engaging, either with the principals directly or with their line leadership, to talk about those issues. They're managing them on the ground. They're not relying on a spreadsheet that says, "This number's good or bad." They're talking to the principals, they're talking to the staff in those schools, they're managing those personal relationships and they're responding, based on those needs.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Chair, this might help. We do give principals and DELs the mobility rates for a school on the staff front. If staff leave a system, they've either resigned, retired, passed away or medically retired. So we do have conversations on that data point. You can have a school that's got a—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Dizdar and, more particularly, Mr Lamb, other than being medically retired, old-age retirement or dying, what are the reasons why teachers leave?

**CHRIS LAMB:** You've had submissions from teachers in this inquiry. What we hear from teachers is about the work that they do, the fact that they don't feel that they have always enough time to support their students, the fact that their administrative work is significant. These are all things that we understand. These are all things that we're addressing. These are all things that we're looking at to remove workload from teachers to free up more of their time to focus on teaching their students and supporting their students in the classroom.

**The CHAIR:** So you're relying on other submissions, rather than your own data and your own knowledge as the chief people officer?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Absolutely not. I'm reflecting the fact that what you've seen in the submissions is what we hear when we talk to our staff. We talk to our staff through face-to-face meetings, through workshops, through focus groups. We understand what they're telling us when they say, "We'd like access to central resources that are developed so that we don't have to spend as much time doing lesson planning," for example. They tell us that, and then we respond to those things. We put those in place through things like the resource hub. So we are responding to those.

**The CHAIR:** So you're saying it's workload. Why do you think teachers stay?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I think there's a variety of reasons why teachers stay. But fundamentally what teachers tell us is that the opportunity to work with students, to make a difference to those students' lives and to impact their future prospects is the number one reason that people stay in the classroom.

**The CHAIR:** That's evidence that John Hattie, for one, has presented—that teachers stay because of students. On the flip side, he says teachers say that they're leaving because of leaders. They don't like the way in which the school is run, they don't like the way the principal's doing things, they don't like the DEL, they don't like the way the system is being run. But you think it's workload, not leaders?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Every individual teacher is going to have their own specific set of answers to any questions that somebody puts to them. But what we hear—and it's actually through some of those forums that we are running with Professor John Hattie—is that people talk about the demands of teaching and they talk about things like that workload and the administrative work that they're having to do that they feel has increased. Certainly we are sympathetic to that, and that's why we're doing a range of things. The resource hub, I mentioned. But there are other supports that we put in place to help take that administrative work away from teachers so they can focus on what they want to do most, which is supporting students.

**The CHAIR:** My final question goes to the two paradigms that have come before this inquiry about teacher retention and the status of teaching. One is that it is workload, and we've got to ease the workload burden to attract new people into the profession. Personally, I don't know why we want to emphasise people and attract people who don't want to work hard or who want to work less hard than the current arrangements. To me, that seems counterintuitive. The second paradigm is that really it's about the status of teaching. We've got to lift the professional standards and the way things are done—for instance, the quicker promotion of good people—quality people—through the system and paying them more after five or 10 years and a whole other range of professional standards of accountability, performance and reward. The department, though, is dismissing that second factor and just emphasises workload? Don't you think it's good that people want to work hard and need to work hard at teaching?

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**CORRECTED**

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**CHRIS LAMB:** I think teachers work incredibly hard; I think they do every day. They do incredibly important work.

**The CHAIR:** How hard do they work in the eight weeks of the year when you've got no idea what they're doing?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I just want to correct that there. Teachers get paid for four weeks' leave per year.

**The CHAIR:** But they have 12 weeks away from the school.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** They have 10.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Teachers can choose during those other weeks whether they work from home or they work from the school location. I know very many teachers who choose to do their work over that school holiday period from home. That's part of the flexible work environment.

**The CHAIR:** What are they doing? It's another area where you just don't know, do you? You don't know what they're doing because you're not allowed to ask them.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Teachers work incredibly hard, whether it's in the semester or outside the semester.

**The CHAIR:** How do you know that if you've got no mechanism of knowing what they're doing in that eight-week period? Eight weeks! It's unbelievable, isn't it, that for eight weeks of the year you've got no idea and you're not allowed to ask them what they're doing? How do you know they're working hard?

**CHRIS LAMB:** As I said, teachers usually have a list of activities that they need to get through for themselves during the school holidays, whether that's lesson planning, whether that's marking work, whatever that is, and teachers work through that work. They do that in a way—

**The CHAIR:** You don't know that.

**CHRIS LAMB:** —that allows them more flexibility over that holiday period to do that from home, just as very many people in the corporate world are now doing more of their work remotely. It doesn't mean that people aren't working hard. In fact, most of the research I've seen suggests that people work harder from home than they often do in the office.

**The CHAIR:** You must be a born optimist and very naive, I'm afraid, my friend.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Chair, I'm having some communication/internet issues at the moment, so I might just pass to Mr Farlow.

**The CHAIR:** It's all those posters behind you.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** I'm interested in picking up on that point in terms of the DELs and the like and managing staff. Is there some form of KPI that the DELs have which they're responsible for in terms of staff management in the schools that are under their remit?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I might ask Mr Dizdar to comment on DELs and KPIs.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** There are several things. Every staff member, Mr Farlow, has a performance and development framework inside the school. The principal and their leadership team line-manage all the teaching staff for a performance development framework. The DEL line-manages the principal for a performance and development framework. We give every school their mobility data and we update that regularly. We have the State average on the mobility data so that we can give guidance to the conversations that can occur.

I was trying to say earlier—unfortunately, I wasn't given the opportunity to finish—if you've got a school with a high rate of mobility, you would, as a DEL, then ask the question of the principal, "Can we unpack what's happening here?" It's remiss to think that staff are not happy or are resigning. That could mean they've had promotions from that school to other schools and it could mean resignations, retirements, unfortunate deaths, medical retirements. So we give the data to facilitate that conversation around mobility.

An alarm bell would ring for a DEL if that data was at a high point compared to the State average and then would allow that unpacking of that conversation. A school that I started my career at in south-western Sydney had a very high mobility rate. But when we unpacked it, it was because a lot of people were being promoted from that setting, were getting great leadership opportunities very early in their career in a setting that was perceived as complex. They were growing quickly and being promoted. So it wasn't a cause for alarm when you unpacked that data.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** So, effectively, the data in itself—as they say, "lies, damned lies and statistics". Effectively, you could go through that mobility data, for instance, and see that there might be what

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**CORRECTED**

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you'd think would be alarming—that the school was seeing a lot of people moving out of the school. But what was happening was they were effectively being raided, like you might have Eastern Suburbs raid the Wests Tigers, for instance, for some of the talent, and you were seeing that in the schools. Is that what could be occurring in this case?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** If it's leading to promotion and career progression and they're staying within the system, then obviously that's great for the system. It might not be good for that school, losing a number of people to promotion. But by the same token, if we find that there's a school that's got high mobility and the reason is that there's a lot of resignation, that would lead to further question. We'd want to unpack why. You know, earlier the Chair said that Professor Hattie referenced that some teachers leave because they're not happy with the leadership or they don't find the leadership supportive or embracing, you know. That would then allow for that conversation. Every resignation—every resignation—from a school is a concern. We want to one unpack why, particularly if they're leaving us to go to another sector and continue their teaching career. We would want to keep them in our sector. We would want to keep them in public education and we'd want to know why.

But people have a lot of reasons why they might resign. They might not be happy. They might want to move overseas or interstate, or they might want to try a different career. So, you know, unpacking that data is really important. I know we fielded questions why we don't centrally maintain that, but we find that that, at a local level, is the best way to work through scenarios like that.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** I just want to move onto that central maintenance argument, so to speak, as well. I think your evidence was about 92,000 staff. Is that correct?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Teachers, yes.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Teachers—92,000 teachers, so it makes you one of the largest employers in Australia, effectively. To centrally manage that data, I imagine, would be a mammoth task and, Mr Dizdar, I'll pick up on your point where that data in particular is not necessarily all that revealing at the top level.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** And also I just add, Mr Farlow, the casual component in this. We've got to understand what casual means, you know. As a principal, I employed casuals, who were only willing to work in term one and then would not work for the rest of the year. They would still be active because they'd keep their number on our system, so it would look like in that system you've got that casual, but they've made it clear they don't want to work for three terms because they're going to be doing something else. I've encountered casuals that only want to work on Mondays and Tuesdays because they're employed doing stuff—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, but that's not typical, to work only one term.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** —on those other three days. The nature of casual is that they do get to choose. They have the agency of choosing when and how and where they'll work. So that's not an easy workforce to keep track of.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have you done any surveys to establish the rate of that? Have you done any data analysis to say, "There is this proportion of casuals who only want to teach in this particular way?"

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy to take it on notice but we do have payroll data that could tell us, you know, what an individual's pattern of employment looks like and overall what that might look like.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, but that's looking at the supply side. That's not looking at what the teachers themselves would actually like to do. You've done no analysis. You can see here, Mr Dizdar, and I respect your experience as an educator and I respect your experience as a principal and I understand that that informs you, that you have no actual hard data analysis to say, "These casual teachers choose to work in this way." The Department of Education, despite being such an enormous employer of teachers, does not have data to say, "Casual teachers would prefer to work like this", or, "Temporary teachers would prefer to work like this". This inquiry has received evidence that there has been a 70 per cent increase in temporary teaching and you have done no analysis, as a department of education, on whether you have teachers who would actually prefer to have more permanent positions, have you?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Can I just comment on that, Ms Houssos? I think we have to split out, because they're very different, temporary employees and casual employees.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes.

**CHRIS LAMB:** They're not interchangeable terms. They're very different types of employment. So I absolutely accept that for many of our temporary staff, they would like permanent employment and, as I said, the temporary teacher numbers have grown higher than we would like. We're in the process of doing some detailed analysis on that and making some recommendations to Government about things that we might be able to do to

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**CORRECTED**

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address that. When it comes to casual staff, casual staff are a very different type of employee and, as Mr Dizdar said, individual circumstances vary greatly. I'm sure there are some casual staff who would like to work five days a week; I'm sure there are some who would like to work permanently, but, equally, many want to work more flexibly than that.

Now the reason why producing a beautiful report that says, "On average, casuals want to work 2.65 days per year" is because it's not specific to the context of the school. There is no point saying, "On average, casuals want 2.65 per cent", if you go to Lismore and that's not the experience there; or you go to Broken Hill, and that's not the experience there. The principals need to be able to manage their workforce locally. We have a class cover system where casuals can register. We've got more than 90 per cent of schools in New South Wales that use that class cover system and casuals are registered through that system. So far in the year to date we've had 157,000 bookings on that system. So we do have the ability to manage that workforce, but it has to be managed locally. There's just no point centrally providing a table that talks about the average that people want to work.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But, Mr Lamb, the fundamental problem across all of the questioning this afternoon has been the lack of data analysis that's been done by the Department of Education. Your own data shows that we have a teacher shortage. We have heard consistently throughout this inquiry that there are teacher shortages being faced across the State and at every single turn your response is, "We're going to manage that at a local level." It's not working, Mr Lamb, and there needs to be some analysis, as you're projecting, about the teachers that we require in New South Wales.

There has to be more analysis than saying, "Well, some casual teachers want to work two days, and some casual teachers are going to go off and do something else in term three, and, in my experience, this is what's happening." We need some actual data to say, "This proportion of teachers could be working in this particular way." The increase in temporary teachers is a 70 per cent increase in temporary teaching. You come here and say, "Oh, we're asking some questions and we might have some recommendations to make." The department was told—

**CHRIS LAMB:** With respect, Ms Houssos, that's not what I've said at all.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —that teacher shortages were coming—

**CHRIS LAMB:** That's not what I've said at all.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —in 2017 and five years later we're sitting here and you're still contemplating the problem.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Ms Houssos, with respect, that's not what I said at all. What I about temporary teachers— and I think it's a really important point to focus on—is that there are many reasons why a job cannot be filled permanently. Under the staffing agreement that we have, that we're party to with the Teachers Federation, we cannot permanently fill a job when someone is on parental leave. We cannot permanently fill a job when someone is on secondment. We cannot permanently fill a job when someone, you know, is on an extended leave of absence. So—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That's not entirely true, is it?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Under the staffing agreement, we cannot do that in those circumstances. The employee who is on parental leave or on long term sick leave or on secondment has a right of return to that job. Those are the terms of the staffing agreement that we have between us and Teachers Federation.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And you are currently renegotiating that employment and as part of that agreement, and as part of that, have you done any modelling?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Ms Houssos, we're not renegotiating that agreement. That agreement is in place until next year. Next year we will absolutely have the opportunity to renew that agreement and we look forward to doing that and having productive discussions with Teachers Federation.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And have you got any solutions for how you can, as part of that agreement, propose to increase the permanent teaching positions in New South Wales? Do you understand? Teachers can't plan their lives. They themselves can't take parental leave. They themselves can't buy a house because they don't have a permanent position.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Ms Houssos, we absolutely acknowledge that this is an issue. We are in constant conversations with Teachers Federation about what we might be able to do to resolve this when the staffing agreement is due for renewal next year. As I've said, we've done detailed analysis on this. We're developing a series of proposals—

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can you elaborate on that analysis?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Sorry, Mr D'Adam. We're developing a series of proposals that we will put to Government with a range of options. It would not be appropriate to talk about what those options will be. That's a decision that Government gets to make and, you know, I hope that we can be talking about solutions next time we are before this Committee.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. We're back to Mr Farlow, who had a few more questions, and then Ms Boyd, please.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Thank you very much. I just want to pick up on the mid-career entry programs that exist for teachers. Of course, in 2020 there was the announcement of the pathway program for mid-career teachers and that was the \$400,000 investment that was supposed to be married up with Teach For Australia. That Teach For Australia course was also endorsed by the New South Wales Productivity Commission in 2021 in the rebooting the economy program as well. I'm just interested in the progress of that. I note the evidence and submission on page 16 about the mid-career program and what to my mind is a relatively generous program, the \$30,000 one-off training allowance and the \$30,000 study completion bonus. I note there are 44 participants who commenced studies, but how many teachers are actually eligible, or how many people are actually eligible to undertake that program? Also, is that different from the 2020 program that was announced, or does that encapsulate what was announced in 2020?

**CHRIS LAMB:** So if you're talking about the Teach For Australia program—

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Yes.

**CHRIS LAMB:** —that is a separate program.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** That is a separate program?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Yes. Were your questions specifically about mid-career transition to the teaching program?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Yes.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Yes. So there are 61 participants currently in the program. We would expect that program to deliver 500 new teachers into the system over the 10 years and we are on track to deliver those, keeping in mind we're still not even at the first-year anniversary of the Teacher Supply Strategy but we are on track to deliver those.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** With regard to the pathway program that was supposed to be done with Teach For Australia, that mid-career pathway program, what's the status of that?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Again, we've been exploring conversations with Teach For Australia. We have put a position to the Government with a recommendation, or a series of recommendations, for them to work through and we would hope to be able to make an announcement on that fairly soon.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** That's it for me, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Boyd?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you. Can I ask, then, if you're not collecting system-wide data, how can you identify systemic issues in order to act to correct them?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Was there something specific that you are referring to there, Ms Boyd?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I'll give an example, if it helps. For example, how many women are retiring or giving up their jobs entirely in teaching because of feelings of misogyny?

**CHRIS LAMB:** That would be a very specific dataset, Ms Boyd. I'm not aware of any organisation that would be capturing data at that level to be able to answer such a specific question.

**The CHAIR:** All Green MPs.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I know plenty but there's lots of other reasons. I'll give you another example: How many teachers in the system are resigning because of an inability to balance their work with their caring responsibilities?

**CHRIS LAMB:** What I would say there, Ms Boyd, is that we have two survey instruments that we use particularly. One is the sector-wide People Matter survey and the other is our Tell Them From Me survey and we ask a range of questions in there that identify things like you're talking about there, whether that's pressure from carer responsibilities or those types of things. I would be very happy to provide you with the information from



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**CORRECTED**

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those, keeping in mind that the PEMS survey has only just closed and it will be a couple of months before we get this year's results. But we do go through both of those surveys and do that sort of analysis. I'm not sure it's always going to be specific enough to address the quite detailed questions there that you've posed but it's—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Just to stop you there. So you do surveys of existing teachers in the system, presumably.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Do you do surveys of the people who have left the profession?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Well, I think we've talked about the way that we manage exits. But, no, again—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Or don't manage exits, to be more precise.

**CHRIS LAMB:** So, again, I'm not aware of any organisation that goes out to employees who left last year and includes them in a staff survey.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I do. I know plenty.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** The Greens office?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Has there been a deliberate decision not to obtain this more meaningful systemic data because it would be inconvenient to then have to fix all of the systemic issues?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I don't think that's a fair categorisation at all. Look, obviously I've been in the department for four months. I've certainly not been party to any conversation where anyone has ever said or suggested, "Let's not ask this question because we don't want to know the answer."

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay.

**CHRIS LAMB:** I think that's absolutely unfair.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So it's not deliberate. Then I would argue it's negligent because, without having that data, it allows you to instead make decisions at a department level on the basis of what your vibe is from speaking with principals. That's just not good enough in being able to identify, address and then monitor the effectiveness of your strategies in order to fix a problem.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Well, Ms Boyd, I think it's an unfortunate categorisation to talk about the vibe. I've never been in a meeting in the department where we've talked about the vibe of principals.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I say "vibe" quite a lot. Sometimes, when working within government, there's a lot of vibe-based decisions, unfortunately.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Trained by Dennis Denuto.

**CHRIS LAMB:** There are no vibe discussions in the department. We've talked about the channels that we have for information—whether they're a sector-wide engagement survey, whether they are our other surveys, whether they are data points like Mr Dizdar referred to that talk about mobility information, whether they be information on complaints, whether they be information on cases that the professional ethics standards unit uses. There's a lot of data. There's a lot of analysis of things in the department. I appreciate that you've asked some very specific questions that, yes, it would appear we don't collect the data to answer those very specific questions that you've asked, but I do think there is a lot of data that is gathered in the department and a lot of data that is used to inform decisions.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So you're saying that even a broad category of reasons for why people are leaving the profession is too niche, too specific?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I was referring to the question you asked about how many women were leaving the sector because of misogyny, et cetera.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sure. I was trying to give you an example of the types of systemic issues you might be able to identify, but just at a very basic level, given that there is no requirement for data collection, there is no collection of data by the department and then there's no analysis of it, you're missing out one of the most fundamental bits of information that can help us to work out how we retain teachers.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** When someone leaves—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** How is this something that you've not thought about doing?

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** When someone leaves the system, Ms Boyd—either has resigned, retired, medically retired or passed away, unfortunately—we do have the broad categories.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** But "resigned"—there are degrees of resigning. Do you have: Are they going to another job? Is there some other issue? Why are they leaving the profession? How can we fix the problem when we don't have that data? It seems very lazy.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We do have those broad categories; I just want to make that clear. You're raising more granular matters and the way we indicated that we're tackling that is providing both principals and their line management with the mobility data to have those conversations back at their site. Mr Lamb has also said that it may be something that we have to look at organisationally to get more granular on, but that's the way we operate. We do have the broad categories; I want to make it clear.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay, but they're not really—yes, they're broad; they're very broad categories.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes. Well—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** But in working out how we retain teachers in the system—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** They give you a sense, a resignation rate—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** —what you're collecting is pretty useless.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** —a retirement rate, a death rate, a medical retirement rate, are important data points. We've got those.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes, but why are people retiring?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We look at those and we can work through those and I repeat what Mr Lamb said earlier: We've got a very low attrition rate from the system.

**CHRIS LAMB:** And, Ms Boyd, if I could just make a final comment on that: In any organisation, you've got to assess the relative merits of investing in a new system or a new process based on the issue you're trying to solve. But if the Committee's view is that a resignation rate, less than 3 per cent, that is significantly better than any organisation I am aware of, of our size in Australia. If it's the Committee's view that that low resignation rate is not satisfactory and the Committee recommends that we need to implement a new system or a new technology that does detailed personal exit interviews, then obviously that's a recommendation that we would consider.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** So you don't think then that we have a shortages problem?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I think they're two very different questions, Ms Boyd. We've absolutely talked about the fact that we have challenges around teacher supply. We're here to talk about the range of things that we have in place to address short-term and long-term teacher issues. Retention of teachers outside—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** You are stabbing in the dark. You don't even know what the data says.

**CHRIS LAMB:** But, Ms Boyd, you're talking about two totally different things.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** They're not. They're interrelated.

**CHRIS LAMB:** We've talked about the data analysis that we do to identify the teacher supply and demand issues over the next 10 years. We have a resignation rate less than 3 per cent for our whole teaching workforce, and when you consider the fact that it's higher in the first five years, that actually means beyond those five years it is extremely low—probably less than 1.5 per cent. Nevertheless, if the Committee thinks that that's not a low enough resignation rate and we need to reduce it further and the Committee wants to recommend that implementing detailed exit interviews in a new system is something that we should consider, then of course we'll consider that recommendation.

**The CHAIR:** What about further back in the supply chain—this appalling stat that 50 per cent of students starting a university faculty teaching qualification drop out compared to Alphacrucis, the sort of hands-on apprenticeship model, where their retention rate is over 90 per cent?

**CHRIS LAMB:** There's no question that initial—

**The CHAIR:** But 50 per cent attrition is appalling, isn't it? What are we going to do about these hopeless university faculties?

**CHRIS LAMB:** There's no question that the attrition rate for people studying teaching at university is too high. That's why we welcomed the announcement of the expert panel to look into initial teacher education.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** But that's about the fifteenth time we've had an expert looking at this panel with no resolution.

**CHRIS LAMB:** That's something that we're certainly happy to contribute to and support the universities sector and the tertiary educations sector.

**The CHAIR:** What's the department's view in terms of an answer? We've got to use outfits like Alphacrucis more, haven't we, because they get the job done?

**CHRIS LAMB:** It's a combination. There is no one way to train a teacher that will work perfectly for every teacher in every situation, regardless at what point in their career they are. We think it's got to be a combined approach. But, certainly, having students who leave high school into tertiary education to study teaching and drop out at a high rate is a challenge. We welcome the expert panel's investigation into that important issue.

**The CHAIR:** I think it's more than a challenge. Currently, it's a disaster.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I want to come back to something you said earlier, Mr Lamb, about ClassCover. I think you said about 90 per cent of schools use ClassCover.

**CHRIS LAMB:** That's right, just over 90 per cent of schools.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is ClassCover a departmental program or is that a private provider?

**CHRIS LAMB:** It's run by a private provider.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is it done under contract with the department?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I'm sorry, can you explain what you mean by that a little bit more?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Does the department have a contract with ClassCover to provide the services that they provide to schools?

**CHRIS LAMB:** No. The department has a contract with ClassCover to use the system. We don't contract them to provide the labour. We contract them to use the system.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That's what I'm saying, to use the system.

**CHRIS LAMB:** No, they are very different things. We contract them to use an IT platform that we use.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That's right. That's what I wanted to establish. Yes, there's a contract with ClassCover with the department. Does that contract have arrangements in relation to data sharing?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I am happy to provide that on notice to you, Mr D'Adam. I don't have the contract in front of me.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So you don't know whether you get data from ClassCover?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Obviously, we get our data from ClassCover, but you asked specifically about data sharing. I need to be very specific in answering that question, so I would like to take that on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** When you say you get your data from ClassCover, what do you mean?

**CHRIS LAMB:** When I said to you before that we've had 157,000 bookings under ClassCover, that's an example of our data.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So you do get the bookings data and you know when a school logs a request for a casual with ClassCover. Is that correct?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Correct. But, Mr D'Adam, to be clear, that is not an example of data sharing.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Okay. I just wanted to establish that you're getting that data. You know when a school logs a request for a casual?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Correct.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** And you know when a school logs a request for a casual and it gets filled or it doesn't, don't you?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Correct.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So you do know where the gaps are. At a granular level you'll be able to say that at this school there was a request for so many casuals and they went unfilled. So it's not true what

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**CORRECTED**

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you've been telling us earlier in the proceedings around not having the information about when there hasn't been sufficient staffing to cover gaps.

**CHRIS LAMB:** Mr D'Adam, to be clear, the question Ms Houssos asked was about have we surveyed our casuals to ask them when they want to work and I answered that question accurately. You've just asked a different question, which we've also answered accurately.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Do you get given the information about which casuals are registered for availability?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I would have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I have two final questions. How much administrative time has been saved by your Quality Time initiative per teacher?

**CHRIS LAMB:** Let me provide some detail on that one. The data that I have here, and this is data that was prepared in August, shows the top four areas where time has been saved. It estimates that at 29 hours per year. I would be happy to provide an update for you if there's anything that's changed since that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So 29 hours per year?

**CHRIS LAMB:** That's correct.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Half an hour a week.

**CHRIS LAMB:** If that's the calculation.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have you asked NESA to conduct any surveys of teachers about their future plans and whether they're planning on leaving or staying in the profession?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I'm not aware of that. Mr Dizdar, are you aware?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No, I'm not.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Are you able to take it on notice and ask NESA if they are currently surveying teachers about their future plans about whether they're planning on staying in the system or whether they're planning on leaving?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I'm happy to take that on notice and provide that if NESA is able to answer that question.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Great. Excellent.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I have one further question. In terms of the resource hub, I understand that went to tender. What is the status of the tender for the resource hub?

**CHRIS LAMB:** I don't have that information in front of me. I'm happy to take that on notice.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** You might be getting two things conflated, Mr D'Adam. The Universal Resources Hub is already in operation. You might be talking about the curriculum resources.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes, I'm talking about the announcement around the curriculum resources. What is that called?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We'll get you some information.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What's that called? What's the departmental descriptor for that program?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Online learning hub.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It's an online learning hub. On notice, can you tell us what it's called?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** And on notice can you tell us what the status—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** The Universal Resources Hub is up and running.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —of the tender is?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, we'll get that on notice.

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**CORRECTED**

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**CHRIS LAMB:** We'll find out an answer to that for you. Chair, if I might make one additional comment on something I said earlier. When I talked about the modelling being our own internal modelling, that was correct, but we did have support from Deloitte to provide that modelling, just to clarify.

**The CHAIR:** We are a bit over time. We can conclude at that point. We thank our three witnesses for their participation and look forward to answers for the matters taken on notice. We will see you again. Thank you.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(The Committee adjourned at 15:31.)**