

Teacher shortages

CAMPAIGN FACT SHEET

Teacher shortages are a growing problem in NSW schools.

There are more than 1100 unfilled primary, secondary and special education positions in country and city schools.

Principals report vacancies in many subject areas including Special Education, Technology, Maths, Science, English, Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education.

Nine out of 10 teachers say their school has difficulty recruiting enough casual teachers.

The rapid rise in the workloads of teachers at the same time as their salaries have fallen compared to other professions is a major cause of the shortages, an inquiry chaired by former WA Premier Dr Geoff Gallop concluded in February.

If there is no action on workloads and salaries the shortages are expected to worsen due to rapidly rising enrolments in NSW public schools.

A report prepared for the NSW Teachers Federation by education economist Adam Rorris found a minimum of 11,000 additional teachers (20% more) need to be recruited by 2031. That number rises to 13,750 (25% more) if the student-teacher ratio is reduced to the national average for public and private schools. (NSW had the highest number of students per teacher in Australia in 2020).

WHAT DO SHORTAGES MEAN FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Teacher shortages mean higher workloads for teachers and children missing out on the support they need.

A survey of teachers in May found that because of the shortages:

- classes had to be merged

- teachers were required to teach outside their area of expertise
- teachers missed out on professional learning and preparation time
- there were delays in students getting assistance from specialists like counsellors
- children with disability missed out on the support they needed
- programs were being cut back and fewer subjects taught
- students were missing lessons or only receiving minimal supervision.

PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS TALK ABOUT SHORTAGES

“Every day there are combined classes. This could be up to 45 students in your class.”

“The guilt felt when you have to call in sick is huge. To know that the kids will most likely not have a casual teacher is heartbreaking.”

“I have advertised numerous times for teaching positions with no applicants.”

“My school has been unable to fill the Head Teacher of Maths position for 5 years because we are a rural school.”

“Learning and support teachers are usually the first to be pulled to fill roles for sick teachers, therefore the most vulnerable students are not getting the support they need.”

KEY FACTS

SCHOOL SHORTAGES

- 1148 vacant teacher positions in June 2021
- 660 schools with vacant positions (30% of schools)
- Individual schools with between 25% and 50% of positions unfilled (NSW Department of Education)
- The number of unfilled positions has doubled since 2012 (Department of Education)
- 8 out of 10 of teachers say they have taught outside their area of expertise or are doing so now. (Federation survey)

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

We can't fix the shortages without fixing the workload and salaries problems that have reduced the attractiveness of the profession. There needs to be:

Salaries: An annual increase in salaries of 5-7.5% in recognition of the higher skills and expertise of teachers and to make salaries more competitive with other professions.

Workload: An additional two hours a week for lesson planning and collaboration (release time) and an urgent reduction in administration and compliance workloads.

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