

Teaching is more complex, but not matched by pay

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An overwhelming majority of Federation members believe teaching is more challenging and complex than ever before and that pay rates should better reflect the changed nature of their work, a new Federation survey has revealed.

An online survey of 6435 NSW Teachers Federation members across the state in March, showed that 94 per cent of respondents said the increasing complexity of their work was not matched by their level of remuneration, which is now further threatened by the NSW Government's plan to freeze public sector wages in response to the COVID pandemic.

Also, 71 per cent of those surveyed said the rate of change of teaching and learning initiatives, policies and administration systems was "too fast", while 58 per cent said their workload was not manageable. Seventy per cent said the administration load had increased "a lot" over the past 12 months

The research findings give momentum to the independent inquiry, "Valuing the Teaching Profession"; a public review by a panel of eminent persons commissioned by Federation to examine the extent and complexity of changes to the nature of members' work.

"The profession is experiencing unprecedented changes in its work requiring a greater level of skills and a range of additional responsibilities," Federation President Angelo Gavrielatos said of the inquiry's focus.

"It has been more than 15 years since the changing nature of work, skills and responsibilities of teachers and principals was last examined, and no one can deny that the changes since have been significant.

"Numerous factors, including technology, the curriculum, student needs, the complexity of schools, social and parental expectations and government policies and prescriptions; have contributed to substantial change over those years."

The member survey, carried out by Insyncresearch between 10 and 27 March this year, also found that 75 per cent of respondents believed teachers "are paid too little", while 76 per cent stated the pay they received did not reflect their expertise and responsibilities.

On the subject of weekly hours worked, 47 per cent said they worked an average of more than 50 hours a week, including 21 per cent who said they worked between 46 to 50 hours a week and 13 per cent stated they worked 61 hours-plus.



Mr Gavrielatos said the new research was the most comprehensive survey of members Federation had carried out in recent years.

“It was a chance for members to have their say about the union and the issues that matter most to them,” he said. “The results will help inform the policies of the union and the collective action necessary to achieve them.”

Members were also asked to respond to the resourcing of schools, with more than a third (36 per cent) describing the setting they teach in as under under-resourced and 6 per cent very under-resourced.

In a majority of responses, teachers said school resourcing levels were seriously inadequate in catering for the needs of children with mental health or serious behavioural issues, and also lacking for CALD and disabled students.

The changing nature of teachers’ work – including matters going to their remuneration – that the independent inquiry will address is borne out by members’ responses to the March survey.

On remuneration and the wage freeze proposed by the Government in response to the pandemic, Mr Gavrielatos said: “While members have been turning themselves inside out to deliver high-quality public education throughout the COVID crisis, the NSW Government has been scheming a wage cut.

“Whether this announcement impacts immediately or in 12 months, it still amounts to a pay cut. It is rejected. It must and will be resisted. If allowed to proceed, it will result in the loss of thousands of dollars in the short term and tens of thousands in the long term through the loss of income and superannuation savings.”

Valuing the Teaching Profession, an Independent Inquiry has invited teachers, principals, school communities and the general public to have their say and make submissions to the public inquiry.

Mr Gavrielatos said Federation has provided advice to Federation Representatives on making a submission to ensure the collective voice of members in all schools is heard.

“By making a workplace or individual submission, members will contribute to the production of compelling evidence as to why salary increases – not cuts – are warranted and overdue,” he said.

Federation is assisting individual members representing all classifications, classroom teachers, specialist teachers, executive teachers, principals and non-school based officers, in the production of witness statements to be submitted to the inquiry to ensure the lived experience of all members is further amplified.

During term 3 and 4, the inquiry panel will conduct site visits and hold public hearings across the state, taking testimony from witnesses and other experts.

For more information or to make a submission, [click here](#).