

Profession merits higher pay, job security and support: researchers

September 04, 2020

Teachers' remuneration should reflect their work demands and the salaries of other professionals who have spent an equivalent time studying, a team of researchers who have been examining the work of NSW public school teachers told the "Valuing the teaching profession — an independent inquiry" on day four of hearings.

Dr Mihajla Gavin (Business School, University of Technology Sydney) said there was no incentive to remain a teacher beyond the early years.

"[Teachers' pay] doesn't respect the demands on teachers," she said.

Associate Professor Susan McGrath Champ (Business School, University of Sydney) said one of the incentives for attracting the very best of the brightest to teaching was high-level remuneration.

Many of the research team's recommendations to the inquiry panel seek to improve the status of the teaching profession, including:

- a national or statewide teacher recruitment strategy to induce greater interest in teaching as a career
- that the Department of Education provide support for teachers rather than purely making demands of them
- that teachers' professional judgement be valued and the complexity of their work understood.



Other recommendations from the group of academics and researchers went to how to best support teachers and principals.

The team suggested reducing the administrative paperwork and audit data collection impost on teachers and principals.

Dr Scott Fitzgerald (School of Management, Curtin University), appearing via Zoom, said teachers' administrative workload provided "little value-add to students' educational outcomes".

Dr Rachel Wilson (Sydney School of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney) said this work distracted teachers from attending to student matters.

"My personal fear is that bureaucratisation of teaching is eating into [teacher-student] relationships," she said.

The researchers also proposed greater employment security within the profession, by increasing permanent full-time and part-time positions (thus reducing temporary appointments).

The inquiry panel heard of the plight of temporary teachers: intense workloads without employment security.

Dr McGrath-Champ said they felt they were continually on trial so they feel they have to do more to ensure they get further work.

Their precarious employment status made them feel they were unable to question the work demands being placed on them, said Dr Meghan Stacey (School of Education, University of NSW).

The team's research showed 44 per cent of temporary teachers wanted a permanent position. Some teachers found themselves entrenched in a series of temporary contracts over a number of years, Dr Wilson said.

Good teachers were being lost to the profession as a consequence of a lack of secure employment, Dr McGrath-Champ said. Job security added to the attractiveness of a profession, Dr Wilson noted.