

## Evidence mounts on the value of teachers' work

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The first round of public hearings by the Gallop Inquiry heard from academics and researchers who validated teachers' claims that they were "overworked, underpaid and undervalued".

Expert evidence given over two weeks of hearings of the "Valuing the teaching profession — an independent inquiry" has strongly corroborated the very same opinions Federation members gave in response to a survey on workload, conditions and wages in March this year.

President Angelo Gavrielatos reported to September Council on the "remarkable" evidence given at the hearings, as well as outlining Federation's policy goals as it prepares its case for Award negotiations in October next year.

"Over the past two weeks something remarkable has occurred," he told Council.

"We had eminent academic after eminent academic and researchers not only present their evidence in the first tranche of the public hearings of the inquiry but also speak to their evidence at the public hearings.

"As they delivered their evidence, you [teachers and principals] were vindicated and validated; overworked, underpaid, undervalued."

In the first week, the inquiry heard evidence from academics and researchers that went to the question of significant and rapid change to the curriculum since 2004, coupled with new policy requirements imposed by Commonwealth and state governments.

The panel was told of the valuable role of teachers in society and increased societal expectations of them, the imposition of a massive, "numbing" workload through "ill-advised and negligent" policies such as Local Schools, Local Decisions, longer working hours compared with OECD counterparts, as well as the IT skills required of teachers now; none of which existed in 2004 at the last inquiry into the value of the profession.

Clinical psychiatrist Professor Ian Hickie stated the complexity of teaching has also been exacerbated by a rise in the number of students with a disability/behavioural issues. On the same day a leaked departmental report showed the Government had deliberately under-stated the number of students with disability in schools and its predicted rise.

The second week of hearings also addressed dollar values, with Alison Pennington, a senior economist with the Centre for Future Work, providing research that investing in teachers is the surest way to rebuild the economy and why investing in public education infrastructure makes good economic sense, necessary to get out of the recession.



Sydney University's Professor John Buchanan advocated a "quantum leap" — a 10 to 15 per cent increase — in salaries to restore historical relativities, recognising that teachers' pay had decreased dramatically compared with other tertiary-educated, comparable professions.

"When we launched this bold strategy, we knew from the outset that we would be vindicated," Mr Gavrielatos told Council.

"Breaking the contemptuous 2.5 per cent salary cap, which has resulted in the flat-lining of teachers' salaries and the decline relative to other professional groups, will not be not easy.

"Through the work of the inquiry we will deepen our member engagement ... deepen community engagement ... deepen political engagement and — through the communications strategy that has been employed since the commissioning of the inquiry — to deepen our reach, to change the narrative."

Mr Gavrielatos said reports on the inquiry in print, electronic and social media had "saturated the airwaves" over the two weeks, and generated an estimated \$1.6 million in unpaid media.

He pointed to some social media comment from members, who said they don't want a pay rise, just more release time. "Well, I put it to you, we want both," he said.

"We still have a lot of work to do, but we've set the foundations necessary to achieve of our policy objectives. We need time to teach and a competitive professional salary to attract and retain the teachers necessary, noting a massive increase in student enrolments over the next 10 years."

Member witnesses, who will provide evidence from the chalkface, will appear before the panel in the weeks of 26 October and 9 November.

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