

## Crisis point - Gallop unveils findings of independent inquiry

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The “scale and intensity” of change to teachers’ work since 2004 has outstripped any other era since 1970, at the same time that the Department has withdrawn support and resources from the profession, the chair of the teaching inquiry told a schools summit in Sydney.

Former WA premier Dr Geoff Gallop, who chaired the 12-month “Valuing the teaching profession” inquiry, said evidence before the Panel showed there has also been a continued slide over the past 30 years in the average pay of Australian teachers compared with other professions.

“Put these two factors together – increasing workloads and very demanding work, and remuneration not matching that of other professions – and teacher shortages follow...” Dr Gallop told *The Sydney Morning Herald* Schools Summit today.

“The Panel’s reading of the consequences of these findings for teachers is that they feel frustrated and ignored but remain committed to government schooling and the challenge of educating all, no matter what their gender, race, language and class; and no matter where they live.”



Dr Gallop described the NSW system as in “crisis”, where he used the literal definition of the word as a time of “intense difficulty or danger” when “a difficult or important decision must be made”.

“The situation in NSW public schools right now fits this definition of crisis,” he said. “There are dangers at play and important decisions need to be made now and implemented wisely.

“For the community and their political representatives, the consequences of these [the Panel’s] findings will be challenging. Education today is more than important for our future and good teachers fundamental to its success.

“Decisions will have to be made and a course set that tackles the issues surrounding public schoolteacher work and workloads, teacher recruitment and retention, and teacher status and remuneration.”

The report and recommendations of the Gallop inquiry, which received more than 1000 submissions from teachers, principals, experts and academics, will be released this Saturday, 20 February, at Council to be held at the International Convention Centre.

Dr Gallop said it was generally accepted that teachers' starting rates have always reflected the standard earnings of a professionally qualified worker in our society, however, it is not maintained throughout the career of a teacher.

"[The evidence] clearly shows that from a point of parity in the late 1980s, teachers' wages have fallen dramatically with experienced teachers earning less than 85 per cent of the average pay of other professionals," he said.

"So, at the same time as the work of teachers has got exponentially harder and more complex, the remuneration for teachers has fallen below that of other professionals."

Teachers in public schools were dealing with rising student need, constant technological change and higher community expectations, which have been accompanied by a constant stream of new policies, practices, programs, resourcing and accountability regimes.

"Perhaps the most visible change can be seen in student populations," Dr Gallop said. "We've seen big increases in the number of students with disability. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with a language background other than English.

"One third of the student population is now considered to have low socio-educational status. In recent years we have also seen a very rapid rise in the number of students with behavioural and mental health issues, a trend that is not abating."

At the same time more was being asked of teachers, who in line with the general ethos of the profession have upskilled and maintained their professional development to keep up with change, "change is the new normal", one teacher told the inquiry panel.

"This rise in student need has been accompanied by a far greater emphasis from policy makers on individualised learning and meeting the needs of each child through personalised learning plans and assessment processes," Dr Gallop told the summit.

"Teachers are undoubtedly, now more skilled and expert in diagnosing and addressing the needs of their students. But their job was made much harder through the withdrawal of support services for schools via the implementation of the ill-fated 2012 policy Local Schools, Local Decisions."