

## Crunch Point

June 15, 2021

[The Gallop Inquiry](#) flagged it, independent research confirmed it and our members are voting with their feet; NSW public education is in the thick of a staffing crisis.

A new report into school staffing in NSW has produced damning evidence that State Government inaction over shortages in the face of burgeoning enrolment forecasts will result in a crunch point for education in NSW over the coming decade.

In many regional and rural locations it is happening now.

The report, [Impact of enrolment growth on demand for teachers](#), found that NSW must recruit 11,000 teachers just to meet the record number of public school enrolments predicted by 2031.

Further, that predicted teacher shortfall rises to almost 14,000 over the 10 years if the student to teacher ratio in NSW — which the report found was the highest in the country — was pegged to the national average, which is lower than the state's figure.

The report, commissioned by Federation and researched by education economist Adam Rorris, confirms that over the past 10 years NSW has under-resourced its public schools in terms of teacher numbers when compared with the national average.

By its own figures, the Department of Education projects total public school enrolments in NSW will reach almost 950,000 students by 2031, up from the 810,000 in 2020.

The year-long Gallop Inquiry into the value of the teaching profession heard first-hand evidence about the difficulties staffing schools in rural and remote public schools.

The inquiry found that unless there is a policy reset — a reset that better values the work of teachers and principals — we will not be able to attract and retain teachers in the numbers required.

The Gallop Report also found that our teachers and principals require a lot more time and support to do the job that's expected of them and that a competitive professional salary is vital to attract and retain teachers.

The Rorris report, received in April, has now put “the numbers” to the staffing shortages we are to expect in the future, and clearly shows the neglect of the NSW public system that has persisted, and will continue to persist, during the Coalition Government's time in office.

But it has been the actions of teachers on the ground since the beginning of the 2021 school year that has driven home the message that all is not right in the NSW public school system.



The list of schools whose members have voted to walk off the job — an action that teachers do not take lightly — is compelling. They are variously expressing concerns over staff shortages in their area that mean teachers are denied entitlements and/or often working outside of their subject areas

Over the past three months, teachers have walked off the job including at Gol Gol, Wentworth, Buronga, Darlington Point and Forster public schools, Bulahdelah and Merriwa central schools, Walgett Community College, Coomealla, Gilgandra, Chatham, Kandos and Concord high schools.

To further underline the education crisis in NSW, an Auditor-General's Report into school infrastructure raised serious concerns about the lack of planning being undertaken by the NSW Government for the provision of public education.

The Auditor-General revealed that School Infrastructure NSW "advised the NSW Government in early 2020 that the currently funded infrastructure program would not meet forecast classroom requirements for 2023 and beyond".

The report further confirms a projected enrolment growth of 180,000 additional students expected to enter the public education system by 2039.

The Gallop Inquiry made it clear the NSW Government won't fix the shortages or be able to recruit and retain the teachers required without a significant increase in salaries and an improvement in working conditions.

As Dr Geoff Gallop's report recommended, it is time for a "reset", not only in the value of the teaching profession but in the value governments place on public education and the nation's future.