

## State in “race” to find teachers to meet enrolment crunch

October 12, 2021

The forecast leap in student enrolments in the next 15 years has put NSW in “a race” to guarantee the education of a whole generation of children in west and south-western Sydney, [new research for Federation has found](#).

The study reveals enrolment will soar to the extent that between 12,400 and 18,600 additional full time equivalent (FTE) teachers will be required in NSW public primary and secondary schools by 2036.

NSW Teachers Federation President Angelo Gavrielatos said the report’s projections were simply alarming.

“As it stands today, classes are being combined, students are given only minimal supervision and teachers are teaching outside their area of expertise in hundreds of schools across NSW due to the already existing teacher shortages,” Mr Gavrielatos said.

“It is a matter of urgency, as this report confirms the crisis is only going to get worse, and it even calls for intermediate measures to head off the projected staff numbers crunch in the future.”

The report, by education economist Adam Rorris, identified 11 “high-growth LGAs”, mainly in western and south-western Sydney, projected to experience public school enrolment growth in excess of 5000 students each by 2036.

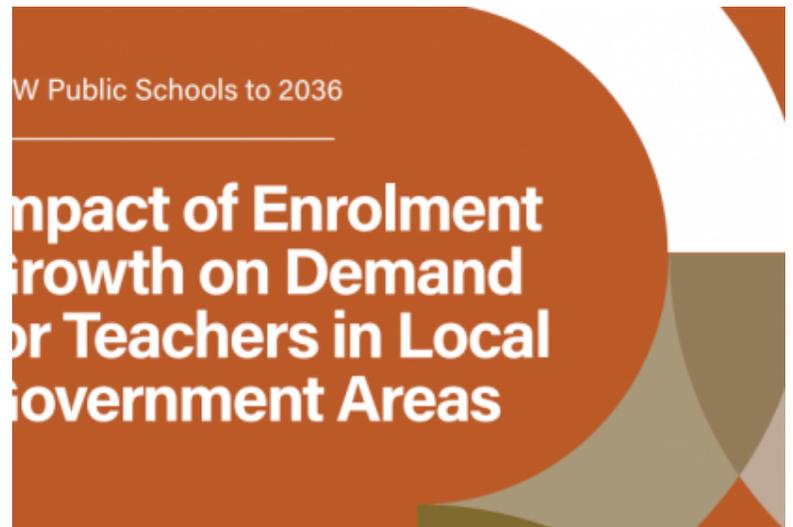
Using confidential Department of Education projections, the research identified five “super-growth LGAs” where enrolments would exceed 15,000 students each.

By those calculations, the Cumberland LGA would require 1448 additional teachers by 2036, an increase of 90 per cent on the present teacher numbers in the area.

Likewise, among the other super-growth LGAs, Blacktown would require 1381 additional teachers (a 42 per cent increase), Parramatta 1347 (69 per cent), Liverpool 1146 (54 per cent), Canterbury-Bankstown 1170 (41 per cent), for a total of 6493 additional teachers needed across the five regions.

The projected number of teachers required does not take into account the existing widespread shortages that have driven members to take stop-work action across the state.

The growth in demand for teachers in outer Sydney will also have a significant negative impact on teacher supply in rural and remote NSW which is already struggling for teachers.



“The size of enrolment increases within the coming years means NSW is in a race to safeguard the right of all children to be taught by a qualified teacher,” Mr Gavrielatos said.

“Secret department briefings reveal the need to reverse uncompetitive salaries and crippling workloads which are an active disincentive for young people entering the profession.”

The report called on the state and federal governments to make the immediate large-scale increase in the teaching force for these priority and high-need LGAs a key policy target.

“Getting in early can only help to remediate the educational challenges that have been exposed and deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic,” it stated.

“It will leave these schools with a more manageable task for developing quality of learning. The alternative is those schools being abandoned to soaring enrolment growth coupled with a cohort of learners already battered and left behind by COVID-19.”

To head-off the emergency, the report recommends immediate growth in the teaching force in super-growth LGAs of 3250 FTE teachers.

“The NSW Government needs to commit to employing in 2022 and 2023 approximately 50 per cent of the projected additional teachers to be required by public schools by 2036 (approximately 3250 additional FTE teachers by 2023 across primary and secondary schools), the report states.

“These additional teachers are in line with the growth in enrolment projections for these super-growth LGAs that will be experienced during the years 2020 to 2026.”

Mr Gavrielatos said the findings confirm the imperative of the “More Than Thanks” campaign, which seeks to reset wages and workloads to attract and retain high-quality teachers to the profession as recommended by the Gallop Report.

“If we don’t pay teachers what they are worth, we won’t get the teachers we need,” he said. “If we can’t staff schools in LGAs in Sydney, what hope is there of staffing schools in the far west of the state?”

“The State Government’s inaction to date shows, at best, a complete lack of planning for growth in the burgeoning west and south-west of Sydney or, at worst, total disregard for the planning challenges these communities and their children face in the near future.

“We have been waiting 10 years for a 10-year workforce plan from this Government and they have produced nothing that reflects the scale of the crisis we are facing or the solutions required.

“A credible workforce plan must include action on two of the biggest factors leading to teacher shortages: uncompetitive wages and unsustainable workloads.”