

## Education Minister Reveals Extent Of Staff Cuts At Murwillumbah Mega School

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The proposed merger of four schools in Murwillumbah will result in the loss of at least 19 teaching positions according to Education Minister Sarah Mitchell, the first time she has revealed the extent of staff cuts associated with the project.

Minister Mitchell told NSW Parliament Upper House Question Time on Tuesday: "Staffing projections based on 2020 enrolment numbers indicate that, when combined, there would be 3.42 fewer teaching service positions and 1.262 fewer school administrative and support staff [SASS] positions in the primary school, and 15.5 fewer teaching service positions and 3.082 fewer SASS positions in the secondary setting." (Source: Hansard).

Teachers Federation Deputy President Henry Rajendra said the loss of so many teaching positions in the newly merged super school would limit the number of subjects able to be offered, increase class sizes and result in a greater workload for already overworked teachers.

A year ago, Minister Mitchell told Parliament: "At its very core this project has the intention to deliver world-class, future focused, innovative learning spaces for the students of Murwillumbah and is the first of its kind in regional New South Wales." (Source: Hansard 11 Nov 2020).

Mr Rajendra said: "If indeed it is the first of its kind in regional NSW, then it should set a higher standard so that every student has access to the full curriculum and more one-to-one attention."

He said it had taken Education Minister Sarah Mitchell almost a year to tell the community in Murwillumbah that this building project would have the net effect of reducing the numbers of teaching positions in the merged mega school.

"We are determined to hold the NSW Government to account on this project and make sure the community of Murwillumbah knows the full extent of the downgrading of education services being proposed," he said.

"Fewer teachers do not equate to better educational outcomes for students and parents in Murwillumbah."

"At the very least, based on the current staffing levels, we estimate the new school will lose a classroom teacher, two assistant principals, a principal and a reduction in teacher-librarian staff at the primary level."

"The new high school will lose classroom teachers, head teachers, a careers adviser, a teacher-librarian and a principal position. An overall cut of 20 per cent."

"The union has repeatedly called on the Department to stop the staffing cuts to no avail."

"If the government insists on a mega school, it is unacceptable the community loses the advantages of smaller schools and also lose teaching staff."

Mr Rajendra said the Education Minister's comments should sound a warning to parents and teachers across regional NSW because Ms Mitchell is on the record saying the Murwillumbah model would be replicated elsewhere across the state.

“This is a model designed to cut costs and force students into larger mega schools with fewer staff and reduced curriculum offerings for students.”