



27 April 2022

A letter to public school parents

Every day across NSW, children are missing out because of a lack of teachers.

It's an unacceptable situation affecting public and private schools. Children can't put their education on hold and wait for this to be fixed.

They have a right to be taught by a fully qualified teacher today and every day.

This is why teachers and principals have made the difficult decision to go on strike on Wednesday, May 4.

The teacher shortages are a growing problem caused by uncompetitive salaries and unsustainable workloads. COVID isn't the cause. It's just making a bad situation worse.

In February this year, there were vacant permanent teaching positions in more than half the schools in NSW. More than 95 per cent of teachers and principals say their school has difficulty finding casual teachers.

The Department of Education's own research shows large and growing shortages of teachers in many subject areas, forcing almost a quarter of secondary teachers to teach outside their area of expertise.

How do we fix the teacher shortages and ensure no child misses out?

If we truly want every child to get a high-quality education, we need a qualified teacher in every classroom.

Significantly, increasing teacher salaries and giving them more time to prepare lessons is an investment in our future that will pay off for our kids and our country.

While the work of teachers has become far more complex and challenging, their salaries have fallen far behind other professions. The NSW Government's wage offer of a 2.04 per cent annual increase won't even keep pace with rising costs, with inflation now running at 5.1 per cent.

Workloads are also excessive, with NSW teachers now working an average of 60 hours a week.

For more than 18 months, we have tried to reach agreement with the NSW Government on a reset of teacher salaries to better reflect the value of the work teachers do and make the profession more attractive to high-achieving young people.

We have also sought an increase of two hours in the preparation time teachers have each week. (The current two-hour entitlement for primary teachers has not changed since the 1980s. Preparation time for secondary teachers hasn't changed since the 1950s.)

Unfortunately, the NSW Government is refusing to make this investment that will help retain our dedicated teachers and attract the ones we need to stop the shortages.

What will happen on Wednesday May 4?

You will need to make alternative plans for your child on this day because teachers will not be at the school.

We understand this is not ideal. But if we do not take action now, the teacher shortages will only grow and more children will miss out.

If you would like more information or to show your support for teachers, you can do so at morethanksthan.com.au.

Yours sincerely,

Angelo Gavrielatos
President

Maxine Sharkey
General Secretary