



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Motion

17 February 2022

MORE THAN THANKS CAMPAIGN

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (12:33):

That this House:

(1) Notes teachers are doing more than ever and they work 55 hours a week or more to keep up with higher student needs and constant curriculum changes.

(2) Notes teachers need to be treated with dignity and respect by listening to their More Than Thanks campaign, along with consulting those in the teaching profession when decisions are made that impact their work.

(3) Calls on the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning to support a much-needed pay rise because, without great teachers, kids do not get a great education.

I thank the Government for leaving me the crumbs when it comes to time, as usual. It makes it difficult for Opposition members to move the motions that they have worked hard on. I am well aware of the challenges and struggles that educators have had to deal with in less turbulent times, but COVID has amplified these challenges. Our teachers are overworked. They are struggling with ever-changing COVID-19 rules and restrictions, attempting to address the individual needs of their students and grappling with constant curriculum changes. Many are working 55 hours a week. The recent Gallop inquiry found that the skills and expertise of teachers has increased significantly and that their daily workload has become more difficult, demanding and challenging. At the same time, wages have fallen when compared with other professions.

Is it any wonder that there is an ever-worsening shortage of teachers in our public education system? How will the Minister address the growing divide between children of the privileged getting the lion's share of quality education, resources and extra learning while the children whom I used to teach in Walgett get the crumbs? More than 1,250 positions remain unfilled across New South Wales, and this shortage is increasing. Enrolments in New South Wales public schools are rising rapidly and, without enough teachers to fill the available positions, it is our kids who will suffer as a result. The vulnerable kids in Cobar, Wilcannia and Walgett are suffering the most.

The NSW Teachers Federation campaign, titled More Than Thanks, sets out the valid reasons for a deserved pay rise for teachers. Why do one in eight teachers leave the profession within six years? It is because of pay and workload issues. Without addressing those problems, the teacher shortage cannot be fixed. The education Minister needs to look at this issue very seriously. Teachers need a pay rise, and they need their workload to be made more manageable. Furthermore, teachers need an additional two hours a week for lesson planning and collaboration, as well as an urgent reduction in administration and compliance work.

Consultation with teachers is essential when making decisions that impact their work. The concerning lack of consultation has led to teachers spending less time doing what they love—teaching—and more time tackling a huge mountain of paperwork. I have received overwhelming support from the Wallsend electorate for the fair treatment of teachers and for them to get the appreciation they deserve for the critical work they do. A local teacher told me:

The last two years have been absolutely chaotic, trying to stay on top of constant changes to the way we're supposed to do our jobs, while we're also struggling with the same pressures everyone else is under. It's nice when people say thanks, when people appreciate the difficulties, but my family and I are struggling to get by.

A member of the Wallsend community told me, "I don't understand how they expect teachers to do more and more and deal with all of this stuff. They do not pay them enough." We are all aware that teachers work hard and of the wonderful impact that a good teacher has on children's lives. We all remember the best teachers. We love them, and the memories and their impact is wonderful. Those who have been teachers know how rewarding it can be, but also how crushing it can be.

New South Wales teachers are highly trained professionals and are struggling under difficult conditions. Their pay is much lower than they deserve. I urge the House to listen to the NSW Teachers Federation and the More Than Thanks campaign, and I ask the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning to please support their request for a much-needed pay rise. Our teachers work hard to ensure that our children get the best education they can. For that reason and their effort, they deserve more than thanks.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (12:40): A good deal of this motion is worthy of support, but the Government cannot support some elements. I absolutely agree that teachers need to be treated with dignity and respect. Like the member for Wallsend, I was a teacher in my previous career, and working with children, unlocking their talent and helping them to grow and be the best people they can be is a wonderful and noble profession and a most important task. I think members in this Chamber recognise that teachers are crucial not only to our future as a society and a nation but also for the role they do person to person. That is of great value. We do need to take responsibility, and the New South Wales Government is seriously providing the best possible education for every child in our community wherever they might be.

The New South Wales Government values the contribution of schoolteachers and has established consultation mechanisms to ensure that the views of the teaching profession as they relate to the public education system are captured. Matters with an organisational impact on the profession are also regularly discussed with employees and their representative organisations, particularly the NSW Teachers Federation. These are responsive to both individual matters and matters of interest to the teaching profession generally. The department is committed to working to ensure that school time is focused on what matters most: learning, teaching and supporting students. As a profession, the work of a teacher is not confined to the hours of the school day. I know that, and no doubt members opposite who were in the teaching profession know that too.

The teaching profession is structured around an academic year of approximately 40 weeks during which teachers are required to attend the workplace and participate in all activities, both those occurring within and outside the operating hours of the school. Further, the New South Wales Government's School Success Model has set ambitious departmental targets focused on improving support, including reducing the administrative burden, which is something the member for Wallsend referred to. As part of that work, in 2021 the department released the draft Quality Time Action Plan for consultation. The action plan received over 4,000 responses from a wide range of teachers, principals, non-teaching staff and members of the community from across the State. Their feedback will ultimately drive decisions about which initiatives are prioritised and is important to ensuring that meaningful and significant improvements are made for our schools.

Teachers are valued and their wellbeing is one of the New South Wales Government's priorities, because we know that when teachers feel supported, students benefit. The 2021 People Matter Employee Survey results showed that 69 per cent of employees at New South Wales public schools rated their workplace as favourable in terms of wellbeing—up two points from the previous survey. The Government will continue to support our teachers through a range of programs and initiatives. In response to the pandemic, the Government invested \$383 million on top of the \$337 million committed earlier in 2021 to fund tutoring support for schools to provide students with additional learning support. By 2023, there will also be more than 2,280 new assistant principal, curriculum and instruction positions—which is 1,372 full-time equivalents—

across 1,760 schools with preschool to year 6 enrolments. That is an additional permanent executive entitlement in our schools.

I am pleased to note that a number of those positions have already started in schools this term. Those roles will provide high-level support and guidance to enhance teacher growth and development in literacy and numeracy, and strengthen school-wide instructional capabilities across the curriculum. New South Wales public school teacher salaries are competitive with those offered by other State education systems. The Government's wages policy over the past decade has ensured that public sector employees' wages have kept pace with inflation and indeed done better than in any other State. The inclusion of this element in the motion is the reason why the Government cannot support the motion.

We know that career progression is important to many teachers, and that is why we announced a new FASTstream program to accelerate high-performing and graduate teachers into leadership roles in schools. The FASTstream program is unapologetically selective and competitive, and will be very rewarding in the long term. Those who are successful will be fast-tracked into a principal role, which can normally take around 20 years, in under 10 years. The applicants will be mentored by our best and help lift teaching quality in our system for students both in the city and the country. We want the best teachers to be our future school leaders—those who will transform the education system of tomorrow through academic excellence, outstanding ability in front of a class and ambition.

Like many others in the community who have had to adjust, the leadership demonstrated by teachers and school staff to be flexible and innovative throughout the pandemic has been outstanding. They have striven to keep our schools open and ensured that learning and support continued even when the toughest pandemic restrictions were in place. For some, often that meant teaching remotely and on site at the same time. We acknowledge that the health and wellbeing of our school staff has been impacted during this period, as it has for students, parents and carers, and the wider community. School staff work in a complex environment with the pressures of human interaction and the needs of students and parents.

Being Well is the holistic and integrated staff wellbeing framework of the Department of Education. The program allows staff to access wellbeing support easily and use the matrix of wellbeing areas and levels of support intensity to direct them to the most appropriate support for their circumstances. The program includes a range of key preventative programs and initiatives within the department, including the Employee Assistance Program, Healthy Lifestyle Check and Respectful Workplaces. The department has actively promoted Being Well through newsletters and monthly campaigns which deliver practical staff wellbeing strategies, support and resources throughout COVID-19. It continues to prioritise targeted supports to assist staff with their health and wellbeing.

Teachers are an essential component of the vitality of every school and the community it serves. We know that the largest factor influencing student performance is the quality of the teacher in front of them. The Government is determined to prepare and support the best teachers it can possibly have in our schools to ensure that every student—wherever they are located in the State, whatever demographic they come from, whatever start in life they might have had—receives the best possible education that the New South Wales education system can give them. We stand in support of that.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:47): The member for Riverstone just said that the Government is interested in supporting teachers where it can, and then, in the same breath, he said that the Government will not support the motion. Am I missing something? That does not go hand in hand. I believe I can safely say that every member recognises the stress and strain that our State's teachers are under, and have been under for a considerable amount of time, under the Government. It is abundantly clear that for years now the Government has neglected to provide the resources, pay and assistance that teachers so desperately need to do their jobs to the best of their ability. It is more interested in penny pinching than it is in supporting our teachers.

Our teachers were stretched to their absolute limit even before the COVID-19 pandemic upheaved their routines and forced them to adapt to an entirely new method of teaching—and certainly not for the better. They have been forced to take on extra workloads by having to organise video calls with each student as well as their parents, tracking progress online through submissions and phone calls at home and providing individual support for students rather than in the usual group scenario of a classroom. It also took extra planning and time for our teachers to transition from an in-person class of 30 to online teaching. That has happened time and time again. The extra preparation time that teachers were required to put in to prepare for their classes has been underpaid, unsupported and under-recognised by the Government.

The past two years have highlighted further the struggles that teachers have been facing for years. The ongoing pandemic has exposed the cracks in our education system and how little our teachers have been working with. Fewer people are entering the profession, and conditions and salaries do not reflect teachers' experience, qualifications or workloads. The concerns of teachers are not being considered seriously. Members of the profession are not being consulted over decisions that directly impact them and their work, and they are being disregarded because they appear to some to be "managing". Even if our teachers are managing, they deserve to be thriving and developing. The educators of our children—the people who shape our children's development and futures—should not simply be coping.

For years now this Government has done nothing but disregard our teachers' needs, and we are seeing the ramifications. Our teachers are overworked, understaffed, underpaid and unappreciated by this Government. They are leaving the profession and telling others not to join, and for good reason: Our

teachers are not being given the respect they deserve. When I say "respect", I do not mean applause or thanks. I mean increased pay to reflect the years of education and experience that our teachers possess; adequate preparation time and proper breaks; and incentives for casual staff to cover absences. The chronic lack of concern for our teachers and their frustrations negatively impacts our children's learning and development. I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing another brilliant motion to this place. Over the past 15 years the member has continued to highlight the failures of this Government. I congratulate her on bringing the motion to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (12:51): Probably we are all in furious agreement in regard to the value that we place on our teachers. The member for Shellharbour suggested that our Government undervalues teachers. Nothing could be further from the truth. I take on board the fact that the mover of the motion and the member leading on behalf of the Government in this debate are both former schoolteachers. That in itself is to be valued. When people from that profession—and indeed any other profession—enter Parliament, I imagine they have a representative duty on behalf of their profession. I have spoken about many aspects of my previous life to support those various roles. But we all know that a teacher's role is not confined to the hours of the school day. The teaching profession is structured around an academic year of approximately 40 weeks, during which teachers are required to attend the workplace and participate in all the many and varied activities. Those activities occur within and outside the operating hours of school.

The weekly working hours of New South Wales public school teachers are not prescribed. Rather, as professionals, teachers exercise their judgment as to the work that is necessary for them to undertake to ensure student wellbeing and to make sure students' educational outcomes are met. Much of the work undertaken during the school day involves teaching and interaction with students. Some of that work is performed during the timetabled release time or free periods during the school day. However, as with any professional role, some work is completed outside face-to-face teaching hours during the school term or in non-term weeks, or a combination of both. The conditions of teachers, particularly the paid non-term weeks during student vacations, provide flexibility for teachers in how they manage their work.

New South Wales public school teacher salaries are very competitive with those offered by other State education systems. I place on the record that in 2011 the annual salary for teachers at the top of the salary scale was \$84,759. Comparing that with the 2022 salary, a band 2.3 annual salary is now just under \$110,000 per year. That is a significant increase in that time, meaning that over the past 11 years the classroom teacher salary at the top scale has increased by no less than \$25,219, which represents an almost 30 per cent increase from the 2011 salary.

The New South Wales Government requires the public sector agency to conduct award negotiations in accordance with the NSW Public Sector Wages

Policy, released in August 2021. As members are aware, the policy provides for increases in remuneration for public sector workers, including teachers, of up to 2.5 per cent per annum. On 6 October 2021 the Department of Education commenced negotiations with the NSW Teachers Federation for a new teachers award to operate from 2022. The department has made application for a new three-year award, offering future increases in remuneration of 2.5 per cent per annum in 2023 and 2024, consistent with the wages policy. The award will be arbitrated by a full bench of the Industrial Relations Commission in May 2022.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (12:55): I support the motion of the honourable member for Wallsend, which is rightly being debated in the Chamber today. It speaks to the urgent need for the Minister for Education and Early Learning to support a much-needed pay rise for teachers, because without great teachers kids do not get a great education. I will detail why this pay rise is much needed and why I support it, relying on what I know from local teachers, school communities, P & Cs and senior students the length and breadth of the Lismore electorate, as well as the erudite and independent report entitled Valuing the teaching profession - an independent inquiry, commonly referred to as the Gallop report. This report was commissioned by the NSW Teachers Federation but should have been commissioned by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning.

I support the motion for a number of reasons, including the current staffing shortages—which go to the heart of the issue of a pay rise for teachers—that school communities and teachers are facing in the Lismore electorate and across New South Wales. At the beginning of 2021 there were 1,250 unfilled teacher vacancies. Student enrolments are expected to increase over the next two decades by 25 per cent. One in eight teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years. In any risk analysis, that should be a red alert for the Minister. That should be enough to cause the Government to act, but it has not. There is a range of reasons for teachers leaving, including the decline in teachers' pay, particularly when set against their increased skills and responsibilities compared with like professions.

Even more telling is that there has been a very large increase in workload intensification across all areas, and there has been no real review into this change. The last review into workload and salaries—and the two have to go together—was in 2004. None of these issues has been addressed, including the resignation rate of teachers, which teachers tell me is due to what they call exponential intensification of workload plus the decline in pay. Further, the report found issues with changes to work, constant policy changes, significant increases in student needs, rapid expansion in technology, and expansion and reform of the curriculum. The proposed curriculum change should not go ahead this year until these issues are addressed and teachers' pay changes. Teachers are drowning in data administration. I have met with a lot of teachers and walked through their day, their week, their month and their semesters, and it is really terrible. What shocked me—and I am not easily shocked—is that allocated preparation time has not changed since the 1950s for high school teachers or

the 1980s for primary school teachers. It is recommended that a measly two hours be allocated to teachers for preparation time as soon as possible. There is so much more to be said. I commend the motion, and the member for Wallsend for moving it, to the House.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (12:58): This is a great opportunity to speak about teachers and the great profession of teaching kids so that they can go on and have great careers. All members agree on how important teachers are and their vital role in the community. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting teachers achieve the best outcomes for their students. This is an opportunity to discuss a program that I fully support. It is named the Quality Time program. It recognises the high value of teacher time and is all about making their day on the job better. We need to make sure that teachers are doing what they love—teaching kids. The New South Wales Government is taking that issue very seriously. It has set ambitious targets for the Department of Education to reduce the administrative burden on teachers by 20 per cent by the end of 2022, as part of the School Success Model. Those practical, on-the-ground changes will make a difference in teachers' lives.

Ms Anna Watson: What are they?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. I have warned her several times to cease interjecting

Mr DAVID LAYZELL: The department is systematically identifying and eliminating administrative frustration points for school staff, and continues to consult widely with teachers to find ways to better support them in the important work they do in the classroom. In addition to streamlining processes and reducing the administrative burden, the School Success Model is improving the support provided to schools so that teachers have the tools they need to respond to specific needs of students.

As part of the Quality Time program, the department has released a new learning resource hub, which provides teachers with high-quality, curriculum-linked resources to make better use of their time when planning lessons. Recent research on teaching effectiveness by the Grattan Institute has recognised the learning resource hub as an example of reforms that can make a real difference in freeing up time for teachers to do what they do best—teaching and leading students.

In October 2021 the department consulted with stakeholders on the draft Quality Time Action Plan. It outlines the opportunities to simplify and modernise

administrative processes and practices, so teachers and school leaders can focus on the work that best supports quality teaching and learning. Feedback on the other opportunity areas detailed in the draft action plan will ultimately help drive decisions about which initiatives to prioritise. It is important to ensure meaningful and significant improvements are made for our schools.

Current prioritised initiatives include an overhauled assessment system, allowing teachers to generate individual student-focused assessments in minutes, and streamlined administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation. In 2022 the department is prioritising initiatives to support teachers in managing their workload, including assessment and reporting; professional accreditation; curriculum resources; administration of extracurricular activities, excursions and data collection; and monitoring and analysis. We are mindful of the ongoing challenges for schools and will continue to work with them and key stakeholders.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:02): By leave: Firstly, I acknowledge the hardworking member for Wallsend and thank her for bringing this important debate to the House. Members opposite, particularly the member for Upper Hunter, have addressed the Chamber today to describe what the Government is supposedly doing to support teachers. If the Government is making any difference whatsoever, why on earth did teachers take the enormous step to strike at the end of last year to say that they deserve more than thanks from this Government? They were forced to do it. It is because this government is ignoring public education. There is a teacher shortage and a classroom shortage.

Professional teachers are tearing their hair out every day trying to deliver the education they want to deliver to their students, but they do not have the resources to do it. They do not have the time to plan the lessons they need to deliver the quality education that they want to deliver and that they have been trained to deliver—that this Government does not support them to deliver. I cannot talk about public education in this place without also talking about this Government's lack of interest in the infrastructure and the classrooms that teachers need to deliver education. In 2011 in my patch in Port Stephens, the Coalition committed to having a public high school in Medowie shovel ready if it formed government. It formed government but in 11 years, nothing has happened. There is no public high school for the entire community of 10,000 people. We have two independent high schools and three primary schools, but we do not have a public high school.

When it comes to public education, this Government has abrogated its responsibility to my community. It is abrogating its responsibility to teachers every single day by not giving them the resources, the pay and the time that they need to do the job that they need to do. Their job is fundamentally and essentially about our future. It is about delivering an education to students who will build the future of our country. This Government continues to ignore the calls from teachers for support. Teachers deserve this Government's respect, and

they deserve the action required to deliver the pay and conditions that they ought to have. Government members in this place should be supporting this motion today, and if they do not it is a complete disgrace.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (13:06): By leave: The one thing we should do to support the More Than Thanks campaign by teachers is to show solidarity with those in the Chamber who are trying to move a progressive agenda, despite the Government's attempt to squash the vote. I will speak very briefly on behalf of The Greens to say that we support the NSW Teachers Federation, we support teachers and we support the More Than Thanks campaign that recognises the overworked and under-resourced teachers in New South Wales. We have met many, many times with local teachers and principals. I know that the member for Ballina and the member for Balmain share my views when I say that The Greens wholeheartedly support the campaign being run, which says the salaries of teachers and principals need to be reset at a level that better reflects their skills and responsibilities, and values the work that they do. We need to see salaries increased. We also need to recognise that a report commissioned by the NSW Teachers Federation and prepared by education economist Adam Rorris found that a minimum of 11,000 additional teachers need to be recruited by 2031. It is absolutely critical that we do that and it is critical that we vote on this motion today. I will leave my contribution there.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:07): By leave: I record my support for the motion and thank the member for Wallsend for bringing the motion before the House. I record my support for the More Than Thanks campaign being led by the NSW Teachers Federation and I put on record again my support for the public education system in this State. It contributes to the fundamental building blocks of an equal society and opportunity for all. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH: I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

Leave not granted.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (13:09): In reply: The Teachers Federation, which is following this debate in Hansard, will be interested in the limited amount of time and number of speakers from this side of the House who were able to speak in support of a real pay rise for public school teachers. I thank the members representing the electorates of Riverstone, Shellharbour, Castle Hill, Lismore, Upper Hunter, Port Stephens, Newtown and The Entrance for their contributions. The Teachers Federation will be interested in the way in which Government members filibustered during the debate to deliberately limit

Opposition members talking about public education, which reflects how the Government values teachers—it does not. The Government talks about how much it values teachers and gives them a patronising pat on the back. But it does not want to give them a pay rise. It does not want to increase their resources or reduce their working hours.

The Government does not want to do that. I have listened to Government members make the same arguments time and again as a member of the Teachers Federation. Not one Government member talked about a pay rise. No-one in the Government talks seriously about reducing or helping to manage teachers' ever-increasing workloads. I thank members of The Greens and all of my colleagues on this side of the House who wanted to speak but did not get an opportunity to. We support a pay rise for public school teachers, like I was. We support an opportunity to look at how we can achieve better working conditions for our teachers so that we can attract more teachers instead of facing a shortage. I urge the Government to support the motion. I thank all of my colleagues and I apologise to those who had limited time. Thank Government members for that, because they did that deliberately. I urge all members to support the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

[In division]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I grant an extension of two minutes for the division.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative.

Noes, 2

Mr Nathaniel Smith

Mr Gurmeh Singh

Motion agreed to.