



Fort Street High School

Parents' & Citizens' Association

12 September, 2021

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell, MLC
NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

Gallop Inquiry – Future of the Teaching Profession

Fort Street High School is a selective co-educational public school in the inner west of Sydney, and one of the oldest schools in Australia. Students and their parents choose Fort Street so that they may take advantage of its longstanding reputation for academic excellence, and the culture of the school which emphasises the value of education in all its facets. This, of course, rests entirely on the quality and motivation of the teachers, a fact which is deeply appreciated by every one of us.

Skilled, dedicated and caring teachers are fundamental to the future flourishing of our society. Yet, teachers, as a profession, are undervalued and poorly treated. Not only in terms of remuneration, but also in terms of career structure, and the ever-increasing demands placed on them. The appeal of teaching as a potential profession for our children suffers as a result. We have heard that over the last ten years, Fort Street knows of only two students who indicated that they would seriously consider entering the teaching profession. Given its position as a selective high school, this is tragic.

How did it come to this? At our last meeting, the members of the Fort St HS P&C were introduced to, and taken through, the findings of the recent Gallop Report, which we understand is the first in-depth, independent examination into the profession since 2004. We found the results concerning:

- Decline of teacher salaries to the point where they are less than 50% of GPs, solicitors and other comparably qualified professionals, leading to 1250 unfilled vacancies in NSW at the start of the 2021 school year and an attrition rate of 1 in 8 teachers over the first 5 years of their career.
- Lack of career certainty, and over-reliance on temporary and casual positions – we have direct experience of fantastic teachers leaving the school because it was not possible to offer them a permanent position.
- The work required of teachers has changed almost beyond recognition since 2004 with increased burdens of administrative and other responsibilities, significant increases in student need, technology changes and not to mention the remote-learning demands associated with the covid pandemic in the past two years. This has eroded the time teachers need to prepare lessons and monitor student progress. Let teachers teach!

We strongly urge the NSW Government to take immediate action to address this critical situation. We call for the NSW Government give serious consideration to the recommendations of the Gallop Report and to their implementation, including:

- Removal of 1.5% salary cap and granting of 10% - 15% increase in wages.
- Revised career structure including new categories of 'expert teachers', and reduced use of temporary and casual employment.
- Minimum increase of 2 hours per week preparation time

We look forward to your response and to discussing this further with you. We take education very seriously, and will be paying close attention to how your government addresses these matters.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Easton
President, FSHS P&C Association