

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Government Administration Committee A

ASKED BY: Anita Dow MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Jo Palmer MLC

QUESTION 1:

Please provide any data around dropout rates for teaching graduates that are burning out and not making it past the five-year mark.

ANSWER:

Teacher Separation with 5 or Less Years' Service (as of March 2024)*

| Year | Permanent Teachers with 5 or less Years' Service | Resigned | | Retired ^ | | Other # | | Total | |
|-------------------------|--|----------|--------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|-------|--------|
| April 2023 – March 2024 | 1,104 | 61 | (5.5%) | 11 | (1.0%) | 2 | (0.2%) | 74 | (6.7%) |
| April 2022 – March 2023 | 1,055 | 56 | (5.3%) | 9 | (0.9%) | 1 | (0.1%) | 66 | (6.3%) |
| April 2021 – March 2022 | 717 | 54 | (7.5%) | 11 | (1.5%) | 1 | (0.1%) | 66 | (9.2%) |
| April 2020 – March 2021 | 945 | 35 | (3.7%) | 4 | (0.4%) | 0 | (0.0%) | 39 | (4.1%) |
| April 2019 – March 2020 | 912 | 31 | (3.4%) | 3 | (0.3%) | 0 | (0.0%) | 34 | (3.7%) |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|------|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|------|--------|
| 5 Year Average | 946.6 | 47.4 | (5.1%) | 7.6 | (0.8%) | 0.8 | (0.1%) | 55.8 | (6.0%) |
|-----------------------|-------|------|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|------|--------|

* This data is collated annually to inform Budget Estimates. Consequently, the most recent data available is from March 2024.

Note: Teacher separations with five or less years' service, by separation type and percentage of total permanent teaching workforce with five or less years' service.

^ **Retired** - also includes Ill Health Retirements

Other - includes deceased employees, transfer to another agency, etc.

- The data indicates that separation rates for teachers with five or less years' service have been relatively consistent over the past few years, with a slight increase.
- New data for March 2025 will be available, collated for Budget Estimates, but significant changes are not anticipated.

- The Department for Education, Children and Young People (the Department) has a range of proactive support strategies for early career teachers, including:
 - Intensive induction and personal development before the start of Term 1 each year for all beginning teachers.
 - Mentor support from experienced teachers at the school level.
 - The BeTTR time release program, which reduces instructional time for beginning teachers over their first two years.
 - Wellbeing programs, including access to the Employee Assistance Program, together with arrangements that involve referral to a psychologist.
- Steps are being taken to strengthen collaboration with the University of Tasmania to ensure Initial Teacher Education is preparing teachers for all aspects of the role. This was a key recommendation of the Independent Review of Education in Tasmania to support educators and we welcome it.

QUESTION 2:

What are the ratios for support staff to students in schools, and what are the wait times for students to get access to support staff?

ANSWER:

Ratio of Support Staff to Student Enrolment (as of March 2024)*

| Discipline | Ratio of Students per 1.0 FTE |
|-------------------------------|---|
| School Psychology | 1:715 [^] (1:750 with CFLC allocation removed) |
| Social Work | 1:711 [^] (1:746 with CFLC allocation removed) |
| Speech and Language Pathology | 1:655 ^{^*} (1:704 with CFLC and Support School allocations removed) |

* Professional Support Staff ratio data is collated annually to inform Budget Estimates. Consequently, the most recent data available is from March 2024.

[^] inclusive of student enrolment and CFLCs, noting that enrolments are not counted for CFLCs

^{**}Speech and Language Pathologists are allocated from Kindergarten – Year Six only, as well as to Support Schools from Kindergarten to Year 12 (a separate 2.8 FTE budgeted allocation)

- The Tasmanian Government is employing record numbers of professional support staff in our schools, having increased by more than 60 percent over the last decade, and has committed \$500,000 for additional scholarships for speech pathologists and psychologists.

- Further recruitment initiatives have included the creation of promotable positions between base-grade and senior levels and the development of graduate recruitment pathways.
- The Department identified the need for a targeted Recruitment and Retention approach; and appointed a Recruitment and Retention Project Officer to support this work in August 2022.
- Recruitment of professional support staff remains a challenge in an environment of national shortages, with Tasmanian recruitment campaigns ongoing.

Average Waiting List Times (April 2023 to March 2024)*

| Discipline | Average in Days |
|-------------------------------|--|
| School Psychology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 days for assessment • 198 days for intervention |
| Social Work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.5 days** (808 students referred externally due to caseload capacity) |
| Speech and Language Pathology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 179 days |

* Professional Support Staff average wait list times data is collated annually to inform Budget Estimates. Consequently, the most recent data available is from March 2024. **Social workers prioritise students and refer them to other services if they are unable to see students directly. The capacity to refer to other services, however, has diminished since COVID-19.

- The wellbeing and learning needs of our students is our highest priority. Effective triaging ensures that students with serious or complex needs can access student support services in a timely manner.
- Waiting list data is impacted by a range of factors including level of need, type of support required (e.g. assessment vs therapy), availability of other supports (e.g. teacher assistant programs), student self-referrals, departmental processes (e.g. assessment for disability funding), timing of other professionals' assessments, frequency of visits to a school and capacity to refer to other community services.
- Wait list times vary across regions and have been reported as state-wide averages.
- Staff vacancies have impacted wait list times in some areas.
- It is important to note that students continue to be supported in schools and their learning needs addressed. In addition to School Support and Wellbeing Teams, students are taught by a skilled teaching workforce, who create inclusive learning environments that ensure quality learning for all.

QUESTION 3:

In regard to the work done in the UK that was discussed, is there data available on bullying and discrimination in those schools in the UK and how has their work seen improvements or change over the last decade?

ANSWER:

- In March 2024, the Grattan Institute released the paper Summarising Success: Why Australia Should Trial Multi-School Organisations, which examines the effectiveness of the Multi-School Organisation (MSO) model in improving educational outcomes.
- MSOs are structured as strong 'families' of schools, operating under joint governance and accountability, with leadership from high-performing educational leaders. This model aims to spread best practices from top-performing schools to others within the network.
- The Grattan Institute studied MSO structures in England and New York, concluding that they can be effective in driving school improvement.

- One case study in the report examines Star Academies (Star), one of the six high-performing MSOs visited by Grattan. Star has a strong reputation for academic success and school turnaround strategies.
- The report discusses Star's approach to behaviour management, particularly in turnaround schools. For example, Bay Leadership Academy implemented Star's behaviour policy, which sets clear expectations for student conduct, including zero tolerance for bullying. The establishment of a School Inclusion Centre further indicates structures in place to support students with behavioural challenges.
- Ofsted Inspections provide some insight into Star's approach to bullying and discrimination, with approximately 50% of Star schools having been rated 'outstanding' (compared to 18% nationally) in Ofsted 2023 inspections.
- Ofsted inspections include assessment of behaviour and attitudes, specifically examining:
 - Whether schools apply high expectations for behaviour consistently and fairly
 - Students' attitudes to learning, resilience, and commitment
 - Attendance and punctuality
 - Whether relationships between students and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture
 - Whether bullying, discrimination, or peer-on-peer abuse are effectively prevented and addressed
- While the report highlights significant improvements in academic performance over the past decade, it does not provide specific data on bullying and discrimination trends in Star Academies schools. Further research would be needed to assess changes in these areas over time.

QUESTION 4:

Equal Opportunity, in its submission, noted concerns of power imbalance between individuals who might make a complaint against the department and the way the department responds. The Anti-Discrimination Commissioner has written to the department noting these concerns along with others, and in response the department indicated that an independent review of current processes would be undertaken. Has this review been completed? And what is the department's response to concerns raised about how the department responds to complaints and how it conducts itself in formal dispute resolution processes?

ANSWER:

- The Independent Review of the Department's discrimination complaints management processes has been completed by the Department's Internal Audit team. Following this, the Department's Secretary met with the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner on 6 December 2024.
- The Department is committed to resolving complaints with a collaborative approach and at the lowest appropriate level. The Department is continuing to review and refine its complaints management processes internally.

- The Department aims to meet the Commissioner's 21-day response timeframe, noting this often requires consultation with multiple business units and operational staff with competing priorities. Responses adhere to the Model Litigant Guidelines, and Legal Services advocates for detailed initial responses as a trauma-informed approach to reduce distress for complainants.
- In formal dispute resolution, the Department is usually represented by a member of the Legal Services unit. The resolution sought by complainants is often unclear before a conciliation conference, and the requested actions may require authorisation from different areas within the Department. The Model Litigant Guidelines include that the obligation to act as a model litigant does not prevent the State from acting in the public interest or firmly pursuing a legitimate claim or defence to protect its interests. Therefore, it is not always possible to resolve a complaint at a conciliation conference, and such complaints may need to be referred for inquiry pursuant to the Anti-Discrimination Act.

QUESTION 5:

In relation to ED5 investigations, there are concerns about the threshold, level of support that's given to a staff member under investigation, and the amount of time these take. Is the department comfortable with the ED5 process as giving timely and just consideration of a matter, or does it think there needs to be something different put in place in relation to teaching staff within the department?

ANSWER:

- Employment Direction No.5 (ED5) Procedures for the Investigation and Determination of whether an employee has breached the Code of Conduct, is a binding instrument issued by the Premier as the Minister administering the State Service Act 2000, and applies to all State Servants, including teachers and all other Department employees.
- Prior to August 2024, an ED5 investigation was mandatory if a Head of Agency had a reasonable belief a breach may have occurred. Recently, ED5 was reissued to allow discretion as to whether a Head of Agency would commence an investigation if there were reasonable grounds.
- Referrals and investigations are time and resource-intensive, making it essential to triage complaints and allegations based on their seriousness. Allegations of serious misconduct are likely to result in a formal ED5 investigation while lower-level misconduct may not require a formal ED5 investigation.
- Employees subject to an ED5 investigation are provided with procedural fairness and natural justice as well as access to support services, a designated contact officer, written information about the investigation process, contact details for the investigator, wellbeing supports, and regular contact from managers.
- The Department follows the Integrity Commission's advice that responses to allegations, including the extent of an investigation and determination of sanctions, should be proportionate to the nature of the allegations and potential outcomes.
- The Department will continue to monitor the use of ED5 and identify areas for improvement.

~~APPROVED~~ NOT APPROVED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Palmer'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Jo' being more prominent than the last name 'Palmer'.

Hon Jo Palmer MLC

Minister for Education

Date: 17.3.25.