More options for teachers and schools

NSW teachers will have the option of applying for a wider variety of teaching positions from Term Two this year. Schools and teachers will be able to choose from the new system or the existing centralised staffing system.

NSW Minister for Education and Training, John Della Bosca, said extensive consultation with teachers, schools and parents had improved the new staffing policy and it will be implemented from next term.

“I want to make clear, we have never proposed to remove the priority transfer system for remote and harder to staff schools and that system will remain, unaffected by the new options into the future,” the Minister said.

“Teachers with incentive transfers will continue to have priority status to transfer into a school of their choosing without any veto. Other priority transfer rights are also maintained.

“It is a top priority of the Iemma Government to ensure fairness to our employees, especially hard working front-line professionals like teachers.

“That’s why the new staffing options will not affect the award entitlements for any teachers in any of our public schools,” Mr Della Bosca said.

Mr Della Bosca said feedback from all stakeholders, especially the Teachers Federation has been considered and a range of initiatives have been incorporated into the new arrangements.

“Pre-transfer checks have been better defined to ensure teacher quality and we’ve cut red tape for schools wanting to advertise classroom teacher vacancies,” the Minister said.

“As a result of the consultations with the principals associations, the Federation of Parents and Citizens’ Associations and the Teachers Federation, we have accepted the Federation’s proposal for working groups to closely monitor the changes and to work cooperatively on further improvements in school staffing,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“However, I can’t accept the Federation’s request to delay the new options for 12 months.

“It is in the interest of public schools and their students to implement these modest changes to the way schools are staffed so that they can be monitored and improved through input from teachers, the Federation and parents.

“Each year we lose talented teachers from public schools to other systems, or from the profession entirely, because many teachers have previously been locked out of applying for vacant positions.
“The Department of Education and Training has a database of more than 21,000 qualified teachers seeking a permanent classroom teaching job at a NSW public school,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“Many are new graduates and many are working casually or in temporary positions, yet they can’t be considered for the classroom they may have worked in for a year.

“The Department’s experience in advertising a small number of positions has resulted in significant interest from qualified teachers in both rural and metropolitan areas. These examples are the best guide to the future success of the new policy,” he said.

Under the previous staffing arrangements, a very small number of positions were advertised and the response was overwhelming. Over 14,000 applications were received for just 320 positions. Examples include one job in Brewarrina which attracted 31 qualified applicants, 15 applications for Narromine, 59 at Cabramatta West, 142 at Tarro, 24 at Eden, 57 at Moonbi, 18 at Sawtell, 22 at Hay and 102 at Parramatta North.

“In implementing these new options for schools, I want to reiterate that we will:

- Continue to ensure each class in every school is taught by a qualified teacher;
- Protect priority transfers, including incentive transfers for teachers who have served in 8, 6 and 4 point incentive schools, nominated transfers for teachers whose positions have been abolished because of changes to enrolments or curriculum, and compassionate transfers for teachers with genuine compassionate reasons to move;
- Maintain existing procedures for Aboriginal employment;
- Place teachers returning to work after a period of leave; and
- Keep the centralised staffing system for schools that wish to use it.

“We must reward teachers and give them more opportunities to develop their careers and professional skills in public schools,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“The role of the implementation group will be important and its assessments and recommendations will be considered carefully as schools begin advertising some vacant positions next term,” he added.

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